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Chairman: Mr. Maitland. .... (South Africa)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 78: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Berry** (Canada) said although much progress had been made towards reforming peacekeeping operations, much still remained to be done. For example, while periodic briefings were useful and appreciated, there was no substitute for direct input into the planning and implementation of missions from those States with troops on the ground. Significant progress had been made in cooperation between the Security Council, the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries in that regard and he made special note of Security Council resolution 1353 (2002) as well as the note of the President of the Security Council (S/2002/56) providing for the convening of joint meetings on specific missions between the Security Council Working Group of the Whole on Peacekeeping Operations and troop-contributing countries.

2. Stronger management was an essential part of the reform effort; he therefore welcomed the imminent appointment of a new Military Adviser and urged that the positions of Director of Change Management and Civilian Police Adviser be filled as soon as possible. He looked forward to the Best-Practices Unit assuming its central role in integrating lessons learned into the planning of new missions and in improving the functioning of existing missions. With regard to gender mainstreaming, however, he expressed concern that there was no focal point for policy and support for that critical function within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, although there were gender advisers in a number of United Nations missions. The Fifth Committee must support gender mainstreaming in the field through the allocation of appropriate resources to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for that purpose.

3. Peacekeeping was becoming increasingly complex and non-traditional, with missions regularly incorporating disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes in order to offer combatants an alternative livelihood following a conflict. Peacebuilders and the agencies in which they operated provided a large part of the exit strategy for peacekeepers because a durable peace was the key to lasting security and a successful peace operation. He therefore welcomed the initiative by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to develop a strategic manual on multidimensional peacekeeping operations. The overall relationship between peacekeeping and peace-building could also be explored more extensively, in particular with regard to security sector reform, which had been recognized as essential in assisting a country to emerge from conflict. Much work remained to be done to ensure that those issues were mainstreamed into reconstruction and development efforts.

4. The international community faced its greatest peacekeeping challenges in Africa. The African Union itself had recognized the need to seek speedy, peaceful solutions to current conflicts and to build Africa's capacity to prevent, manage and resolve all conflicts on the continent. The question remained of how the collective peacekeeping experience of the United Nations, as well as other efforts under way to build Africa's peacekeeping capacity, could best be applied. In July 2002 the Group of Eight had agreed to an extensive action plan in response to the New Partnership for Africa's Development, which included measures to enhance peace and security in Africa, and develop peacekeeping capabilities. All members of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations should reflect on the role that Committee might play in building African capacity and helping donors to share information and coordinate their efforts. His Government was committing $15 million for a peace and security initiative in West Africa, specifically for the member countries of the Economic Community of West African States. It would also explore other ways to support the Group of Eight action plan.

5. Improved cooperation, strengthened management of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, linking of peacekeeping and peace-building and facilitating peace and security in Africa were critical issues for the future success of United Nations peacekeeping. A vital and dynamic Special Committee should play a greater role than ever in such efforts. His delegation looked forward to cooperating with others with a view to reaching agreement on a forward-looking agenda focused on results.

6. **Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein** (Jordan), speaking on behalf of the member countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, recalled that the position of the Non-Aligned Movement was that peacekeeping operations must abide strictly by the guiding principles articulated at its Eleventh Ministerial Conference in

Cairo and the Durban Conference of 1998 and those contained in the report of the Special Committee (A/56/863, paras. 51 to 56). The establishment or extension of any peacekeeping operation must be based on the consent of the parties, non-use of force except in self-defence, impartiality, clearly defined mandates and secure financing. Peacekeeping, while an important tool for the maintenance of international peace and security, was no substitute for a permanent solution or for addressing the underlying causes of conflicts. It had proved most useful when, as a temporary measure, it had prevented escalation and created an atmosphere conducive to exploring peaceful avenues for ending a conflict.

7. The Non-Aligned Movement welcomed the Under-Secretary-General's commitment to engage in a dialogue with Member States with a view to reducing the number of cases of misconduct. All troop-contributing countries had at some time been shamed by the behaviour of an individual or a small group of individuals. Any such misconduct was a stain on the reputation of both the contributing country and the United Nations. It was important to clarify the legal status of all categories of contributed personnel, especially police, in order to reduce the likelihood of confusion over subsequent actions to be taken. The Organization should present its position on that issue in writing and hold consultations between the Secretariat and the troop-contributing countries.

8. In cases of gross misconduct requiring subsequent prosecution under national jurisdictions, lawyers from the contributing country should be able to join in any investigation mounted by the Organization so that the United Nations could learn about the court system of the contributing country while the legal representatives of the latter could ensure that the evidence provided grounds for prosecution. The recommendations of the working group on disciplinary issues could provide a basis for comprehensive discussion between the Secretariat and the Member States.

9. With regard to Headquarters and mission leadership, while welcoming the appointment of the Military Adviser, the Non-Aligned Movement expressed concern at the growing predominance of certain regional groups or even countries in senior posts. It remained of the view that the three senior military positions in the field, Force Commander, Deputy Force Commander and Chief of Staff, should be filled by nationals of the largest contributors to that force and that no Force Commander or senior officer should be appointed to a mission to which his or her country was not making a sizeable contribution in the form of troops. The Organization should avoid a situation where the industrialized world was supplying the Commanders while the developing world was supplying the troops, which would hardly encourage countries from the North to contribute more troops to peacekeeping operations.

10. With regard to rapid deployment, while recognizing the benefits of joint training, the Non-Aligned Movement continued to oppose the Standby Forces High-Readiness Brigade initiative because, by referring to a brigade, the authors of the scheme appropriated for themselves the authority of the Secretary-General to decide the composition of part or all of a peacekeeping force. He requested the Secretariat to take note of the Non-Aligned Movement's opposition to that scheme.

11. Turning to recruitment, the Non-Aligned Movement welcomed efforts to improve the representation of developing and troop-contributing countries in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. As for entitlements, it expressed concern that any change in the mean subsistence allowance for peacekeeping operations without a commensurate adjustment to hazard pay, which traditionally had been too low given the dangerous situations in which peacekeepers were deployed, would only serve as a disincentive for developing country participation in United Nations operations.

12. The Non-Aligned Movement welcomed the increase in the rate of reimbursement for most if not all major troop-contributors, with regard to both troop costs and contingent-owned equipment, but stressed the need for all Member States to pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions and reaffirmed the obligation of Member States to bear the expenses of the Organization as apportioned by the General Assembly, bearing in mind the special responsibility of the permanent members of the Security Council.

13. With regard to the rules of engagement, the Non-Aligned Movement insisted that all countries taking part in a United Nations peacekeeping operation must abide by the United Nations rules of engagement and

not by their own national rules of engagement, as was currently the case with some participating countries.

14. The Non-Aligned Movement was proud to have been represented in almost every operation since 1948 and, in recent years, to have supplied the majority of troops to United Nations peacekeeping missions worldwide, especially the most dangerous operations. Deeply aware of the risks inherent in peacekeeping, it paid tribute to the more than 1,500 United Nations peacekeepers who had lost their lives in the service of the United Nations.

15. **Ms. Baaziz** (Algeria) said that in order to succeed, peacekeeping operations must be based on principles such as the consent of the parties, impartiality, non-use of force except in self-defence, a clear, realistic and credible mandate and adequate resources.

16. The report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (the Brahimi report) (A/55/305-S/2000/809) had identified the challenges facing the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Steps must also be taken to ensure the recruitment of qualified personnel in the field, who should receive proper training before deployment reflecting the new elements in peacekeeping operations such as humanitarian aspects, the fight against HIV/AIDS, assistance to civilian populations and political training regarding the specific situation of each mission. Further progress was also necessary in ensuring close cooperation between the Security Council, the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries in order to take into account the legitimate concerns of troop-contributing countries and involve them in the decisions which affected the lives of their troops. Her delegation supported broader consultations, through the consultation mechanism between the Security Council and troop-contributing countries which should not be limited only to countries supplying large numbers of troops.

17. Regional organizations, in cooperation with the United Nations, could play an important role in peacekeeping. The regions most affected by conflict, particularly in Africa, should receive special attention. The establishment of the Organization of African Unity/African Union (OAU/AU) mechanism for the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts as well as the mediation missions undertaken by African States in Africa were proof of their desire to promote peace throughout the continent. She expressed the hope that the forthcoming review of the cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union would give new impetus to that cooperation.

18. **Mr. Zhang** Yishan (China) welcomed the successes of recent peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Angola, Timor-Leste, and Afghanistan. His delegation fully supported peacekeeping as well as the efforts of all parties concerned to reform peacekeeping operations based on the lessons learned in planning, deployment and response capacity. It was important that the mandates of peacekeeping missions should be defined taking into account circumstances on the ground, including the views of the country and region concerned, and that they should be realistic and feasible and have clear goals. Peacekeeping operations, in particular in Africa, should also involve coordinated action on the part of all United Nations agencies, regional organizations and the international community, which must show the political will necessary to commit adequate human, financial and material resources to enhancing capacity for conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace-building. Peacekeeping was not an end in itself but rather a means to promote international peace and security while simultaneously addressing problems such as poverty and disease and eliminating the root causes of conflict.

19. His delegation remained concerned at the increasing tension and violence in Palestine and the Middle East, which threatened the parties involved as well as the entire region. That situation deserved as much attention from the international community as did situations elsewhere, and he stressed the need for increased efforts to ensure reconciliation between Israel and Palestine based on relevant Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace.

20. He expressed support for increased cooperation between the Security Council and troop-contributing countries and hoped the latter would continue to express their views to the Security Council Working Group of the Whole on Peacekeeping Operations. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations should likewise increase its cooperation with troop-contributing countries as well as the transparency of peacekeeping planning, preparation, policy-making and deployment. The Department should also increase the transparency of its reforms and ensure equitable geographic distribution of personnel, especially by

recruitment from those countries which were underrepresented in the Department.

21. His Government recognized the value of peacekeeping operations. On the concrete level, it had decided to provide a non-combat unit to the standby arrangements system and was considering supplying medical and/or engineering support to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It would continue to increase its practical contribution to peacekeeping operations as its resources allowed.

22. **Mr. Motomura** (Japan) said that successful peacekeeping operations in such areas as Timor-Leste and Sierra Leone highlighted the continuing importance of peacekeeping operations and the need to implement the reform agenda, capitalizing on the Secretariat's reinforced capacity. He applauded the Secretariat's efforts to elaborate a handbook on multidimensional peacekeeping operations and standard operating procedures, and expressed the hope that it would also conduct a comprehensive review of lessons learned. In September, in cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and under the joint auspices of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the Institute of Policy Studies of Singapore and the Japan Institute for International Affairs, Japan had hosted a conference on lessons learned from the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor. The outcome of that conference would be shared with Member States.

23. In the general debate in the plenary session, the Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Koizumi, had highlighted the importance of post-conflict assistance in the consolidation of peace- and nation-building. His delegation believed that the Security Council initiatives concerning exit strategies to pave the way for peace-building should be taken up by the appropriate General Assembly bodies. With regard to the need for cooperation between the Security Council and countries that contributed military, police and civilian personnel, he reiterated Japan's position that the new consultative mechanism established by the note of the President of the Security Council must be operated in an inclusive manner.

24. His delegation encouraged the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to take concrete action to guarantee the safety and security of peacekeeping personnel, based on its own security review, the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and input from the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator in terms of information sharing, pre-deployment and in-mission training, equipment and legal measures. It hoped that the Secretary-General, in his next report, would provide detailed information on the specific measures taken.

25. His delegation welcomed the consensus reached on enhancing a rapid deployment capability in the areas of personnel, materiel and funding. It appreciated the Department's regular consultations with Member States on improving the United Nations Standby Arrangements System and remained interested in the proper management of strategic deployment stocks, deeming the current stock level — sufficient for the establishment of one complex mission — appropriate for the time being.

26. Given how crucial it was to improve the representation of underrepresented and unrepresented Member States, his delegation agreed with the Office of Internal Oversight Services that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should review the current composition of its staff in terms of geographical distribution and make an effort to improve the situation during the next phase of recruitment for additional and rotation posts. It hoped that the Secretary-General would provide specific information in that regard to the Special Committee at its forthcoming session.

27. With the development of a mechanism for broader cooperation, Japan had entered a new phase of its cooperation with peacekeeping operations, as evidenced by its deployment since February of over 690 troops and staff officers to Timor-Leste.

28. **Mr. Al-Najar** (Yemen) said that collective and coordinated efforts, before and after peacekeeping operations, were important for peace-building. Peace was the justification of the United Nations and was the means to save humanity from the horrors of war. It was an essential condition for achieving well-being and development for all countries.

29. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's reports concerning peacekeeping operations, transparency and paving the way for non-participating countries to take part in peacekeeping. The object was to reinforce the idea that peace involved everyone.

30. His Government, recognizing the importance of peacekeeping, had established and thoroughly trained Yemeni Units in order to enforce international peace within the framework of the United Nations. Despite their training, however, those units had not yet served. He affirmed that Yemen was ready to participate in humanitarian peace missions if the United Nations agreed to that.

31. **Mr. Assaf** (Lebanon) said that further measures should be taken to improve peacekeeping operations, especially with regard to rapid deployment, ensuring the security of air and sea transport, improving relations between Headquarters and field missions, and coordination between the Organization and troop-contributing countries. Peacekeeping operations should be based on the consent of the parties, impartiality and respect for sovereignty.

32. The first United Nations peacekeeping operation, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, had been unable to achieve its mission because Israel did not want peace. Israel had waged a number of wars and occupied Arab lands, including southern Lebanon in 1978; the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) had been established following that incursion. Lebanon regarded UNIFIL as a partner in the liberation of its land from Israeli occupation. UNIFIL had undergone a structural reform at a time when it had still to achieve an important mission in order to reach comprehensive and global peace in the region. Any change in the mandate or size of UNIFIL must be approved by his Government.

33. The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories was a threat to international peace and security. Israel was still committing all kinds of aggression against the Palestinian people. He called upon the international community to put pressure on Israel to accept the deployment of an international peacekeeping force that would restore peace and security in the region in accordance with the relevant provisions of international law.

34. **Mr. Stagno** (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group countries, said that the Rio Group firmly supported the United Nations peacekeeping operations, but also felt that the demands of peacekeeping should not deflect the United Nations from dealing with matters of similar importance on its agenda, such as equitable social and economic development. It fully supported the proposals and conclusions in the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/56/863), especially with regard to the role of the Special Committee, the importance of civilian police and other law-enforcement bodies in fulfilling the multidimensional mandates of peacekeeping operations, financing and the safety and security of United Nations peacekeeping personnel. The Rio Group reaffirmed the important role of the Special Committee as the only United Nations body mandated to undertake comprehensive reviews of the whole question of peacekeeping operations, it was therefore essential for all other United Nations bodies involved in peacekeeping to coordinate their activities in pursuit of their common goals.

35. In recent years, the traditional military definition of peacekeeping missions had been extended to include political, legal and humanitarian components, in consideration not only of the States involved but also of the human beings who lived in them. In that connection, the work of the civilian police and judicial experts was crucial; all Member States should become involved in designing training programmes and procedures that would best make use of their services.

36. The financing of peacekeeping operations was another concern. The Rio Group hoped that the report on the rapid-deployment difficulties faced by the troop-contributing countries, would recommend solutions, especially to the financial obstacles that arose at the initial stages of deployment and to the delayed payments that so plagued peacekeeping operations. New ways should also be found to give the developing countries more opportunities to obtain procurement contracts, as recommended in General Assembly resolutions 54/14 and 55/247.

37. The Special Committee had made it clear that the success of peacekeeping operations depended to a large extent on clearly defined mandates, objectives and command structures and on secure financing, allowing effective and rapid deployment with the highest possible guarantees of security for the participants. Indeed, everything must be done to protect those who, in the field, made the international community's commitment to peace a reality, even to the point of sacrificing their lives.

38. **Mr. Abu Zeid** (Egypt) said that the developing countries were contributing most of the human resources to peacekeeping operations, while the developed countries were mainly providing financing

or sending personnel to the least dangerous missions; that situation was a source of deep concern to many developing countries. Peacekeeping operations were the international community's response to crises that posed a threat to international peace and security. A regional response to international crises was not a permanent solution for dealing with such crises. The responsibility for maintaining international peace and security must be collective.

39. A number of international peacekeepers has committed serious violations that conflicted with the moral obligations that ensued from the duties and honour of serving in United Nations peacekeeping operations. He affirmed the right of the contributing countries to take the necessary disciplinary measures vis-à-vis observers and other peacekeeping personnel, and the right of the national courts to take up violations committed by such personnel. No immunity should be granted to such individuals. His delegation looked forward to a more intensive and constructive dialogue between the Secretariat and delegations in order to solve that problem as soon as possible.

40. All countries must fulfil their financial obligations towards peacekeeping operations. Such undertaking would help the Organization accomplish its role in maintaining international peace and security and achieving stability.

41. **Mr. Williamson** (United States of America) said that in the unstable contemporary global environment, there was an important role for a comprehensive model of peacekeeping. Yet peace-building was equally important, and the United Nations peacekeeping missions, with all their imperfections, offered hope for achieving that as well. In the post-cold-war era, peacekeeping had evolved into a force for lasting peace, a framework for civilian as well as military activity, for institution-building, transitional justice, economy-building and education. Peacekeeping provided the context and the security within which a civil society could take root and grow. Mission mandates had become increasingly robust, sophisticated and tailored to specific needs, and were premised on phasing out the mission as soon as the powers of government could be turned over to the governed.

42. In recent years, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had been given the tools with which to carry out its responsibilities effectively, and among its goals now were the strengthening of the rule of the law and respect for human rights in post-conflict situations, including the training and restructuring of local police forces and the establishment of complete legal systems within which they could work. Cessation of a conflict did not guarantee a sustainable peace; that could come about only if the underlying problems that had led to the conflict were resolved. Peacekeepers began the process, but the international community must work together to deal with the long-term development needs.

43. There were some basic post-conflict axioms: civilian police, integrated into an effective, fair legal system and a functioning judiciary, were critical in developing sustainable peace; a competent, impartial legal system could deal also with war crimes and ethnic cleansing, in order to heal the wounds of the society and end the culture of impunity; the society thus shaped must be tolerant of all ethnic groups, provide opportunities for citizens regardless of gender, and guarantee the return of refugees or displaced persons; an economy, based on law and respect for property rights and free of corruption, must be jump started because people in desperate poverty could become the terrorists of the future; in some cases significant donor assistance was required, and in others, the countries involved, rooting out corruption, must use their natural resources to fund a large part of their own recovery; former combatants must be demobilized, disarmed and reintegrated into a growing economy; and finally a well-defined exit strategy must be built into every mission.

44. **Mr. Balarezo** (Peru) said that his delegation welcomed and supported the progress made in the reform and revitalization of key aspects of peacekeeping, in particular the design of an integral rapid deployment strategy, the strengthening of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the implementation of quick-impact projects on the ground and the establishment of a strategic reserve unit in Brindisi. That initial phase of structural and conceptual consolidation of peacekeeping operations provided a basis for future reform, including fuller participation by all Member States in peacekeeping operations. In that connection Peru welcomed efforts to simplify the United Nations Standby Arrangements System in order to encourage more countries to contribute troops and specific actions to enhance personnel training for future peacekeeping operations, including uniform standards would help troops of different nationalities

serving under a single command. It also welcomed the organization of regional seminars to develop standardized generic training modules, with the direct participation of national institutions. Direct contact and transparency were prerequisites for all aspects of peacekeeping operations, including procurement.

45. Many developing countries had difficulty in complying with rapid deployment time frames. He hoped that the Secretary-General's report on that topic would soon be issued and would contain adequate and relevant proposals. In addition, mechanisms for the exchange of information between the Security Council and troop-contributing countries must be strengthened in order to ensure that those countries could participate in the critical and key phases of defining peacekeeping operations and establishing their mandates.

46. **Mr. Kulyk** (Ukraine) said that millions of people throughout the world still pinned their hopes on United Nations peacekeeping operations, which had become more complex as the nature of conflicts had changed. Effective new mechanisms and new approaches had been put in place as a result of the Brahimi report. It remained for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to adopt new working methods and a new management culture and improve the quality and substance of its activities, in keeping with the five strategic goals it had set itself. His delegation believed that in staffing the Department, priority should be given to the major troop-contributing countries, especially those countries which were not represented at all in the Department.

47. The enhancement of the United Nations rapid deployment capability would be furthered by the strategic deployment stocks mechanism advocated by the Department's Office of Mission Support. Another useful new approach that would facilitate rapid deployment was the establishment of a generic mission headquarters and on-call lists of military and civilian police personnel, for whom the necessary training modules would now have to be developed; Ukraine would submit proposals in that respect.

48. Substantial progress had also been made in improving consultation mechanisms between the troop-contributing countries, the Security Council and the Secretariat. Partnership and respect were indispensable, and the agreed decisions taken on the matter should now be fully implemented, to build on the progress made in the past year. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations should also continue the practice of meeting with the Security Council Working Group of the Whole on Peacekeeping Operations.

49. It was important to maintain the pace of reform and to continue to strengthen the United Nations peacekeeping capacity; one way to do so was to improve the Secretariat's information management and analysis capacity. Unfortunately, the safety and security of the peacekeeping personnel was still an acute issue. It was the central element of any peacekeeping operation. The Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel needed to be more strictly observed; and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, having undertaken a welcome review of security requirements in peacekeeping missions, should continue working on the issue.

50. Ukraine, since the first years of its independence, had considered participation in peacekeeping activities as its contribution towards making the world safer: thus far it had dispatched almost 1,500 military and civilian personnel to nine ongoing operations. In recognition of the dedication, professionalism and courage of the United Nations peacekeepers and in honour of those who had lost their lives in the performance of duty, Ukraine had proposed the designation of an International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers. It would be submitting a draft resolution to that effect and hoped it would be unanimously endorsed.

51. **Mr. Song** Seong-jong (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation strongly supported the expansion of the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi and the introduction of a rapid deployment capability in the context of the United Nations Standby Arrangements System. The Republic of Korea would work closely with the Secretariat to upgrade its level of participation in that system.

52. While welcoming the provision of additional resources to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, he called on it to conduct regular self-evaluations with a view to reforming its organizational culture and reorienting its relationship with field missions and other agencies of the United Nations system, in close cooperation with troop-contributing countries. He welcomed the Secretariat's ongoing efforts to incorporate lessons learned in the field into strategic planning and the formulation and implementation of policies, and called for the strengthening of cooperation and consultation between

the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries to maximize the benefits of lessons learned. Gross misconduct on the part of peacekeepers in mission areas posed a serious challenge to United Nations peacekeeping operations and to the cause of international peace and security; his delegation expected the Secretariat to take comprehensive measures at the earliest time to prevent the recurrence of such misconduct.

53. The Republic of Korea had been and would continue to be an active participant in United Nations peacekeeping operations, having deployed over 2,000 peacekeepers in six different missions around the world since 1993; its troops were currently serving in four missions, including those in Timor-Leste and Western Sahara.

54. **Mr. Mosgaard** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, called for intensified cooperation between the United Nations and the European Union and its member States in the areas of conflict prevention and crisis management. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations should develop a strategy for the effective coordination of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, both at Headquarters and in the field, and their integration in the planning and organization of peacekeeping operations. The European Union hoped that the recruitment process would generate improvements in the Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, which could play a critical role to that end. It looked forward to discussing the issue in depth in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

55. The availability, training and qualifications of civilian police were equally vital, and their status must be properly defined. The operational and other needs of civilian police and other rule-of-law components must be met within the framework of a comprehensive, system-wide approach to establishing the rule of law in mission areas. African peacekeeping capacities, in particular, must be enhanced and better coordinated, with an emphasis on better training and deployment, and on meeting the needs of new troop-contributing countries from Africa. With regard to other training matters, a focal point needed to be established to coordinate training for military, police and civilians. A training programme for key mission personnel must also be launched. While welcoming such improvements as the strategic deployment stocks, pre-mandate commitment authority and the emerging "on-call list" for a generic mission headquarters, the European Union stressed the need to improve information and the sharing of information on potential conflicts, and for enhanced synchronization of initiatives to ensure that the necessary personnel and equipment were in the right place at the right time.

56. The European Union fully supported the principle of gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping and encouraged the establishment of back-up capacity in the Secretariat to support gender focal points in the field. It welcomed the recent introduction of two new mechanisms to improve cooperation between troop-contributing countries, the Security Council and the Secretariat. The effectiveness of those mechanisms should be kept under review and adjustments considered when necessary. In conclusion, he stressed the need to bear in mind the whole continuum of crisis management — from conflict prevention to conflict management and peacekeeping — and to ensure smooth transitions between phases, as recommended in the Brahimi report. In the past two years, much headway had been made in implementing those recommendations; however, the European Union felt strongly that that work must continue.

57. **Mr. Adamia** (Georgia) stressed the need for adequate resources to achieve the five strategic goals of the Organization's peacekeeping mandate. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's proposals for a strategic reserve, the further strengthening and development of the United Nations Standby Arrangements System and the timely availability of air- and sea-lift capacity. It also attached importance to developing a civilian police "on-call list", as recommended in the Brahimi report. It was convinced, however, that only the establishment of a fully operational high-readiness brigade would render the Standby Arrangements System truly effective.

58. Turning to complex operations, he expressed his delegation's satisfaction with the progress achieved in the preparation of a strategic manual on multidimensional operations. Major considerations in that regard should include the rapid deployment of police officers during multidimensional operations; the integration of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes into the mandates of peacekeeping operations; and the capacity of

peacekeeping missions to identify and address terrorist threats. The Brahimi report and its follow-up reports provided an important blueprint for the maintenance of international peace and security, and a benchmark for the assessment of successes and failures of reform efforts.

59. For eight years, the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia had been limited to monitoring compliance with the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces, signed in Moscow in 1994, which made the peacekeeping forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States the sole guarantors of peace and stability in the conflict zone. That arrangement called into question one of the basic principles of peacekeeping — impartiality — given that more than 2,000 Georgians had been killed in the conflict zone, and peacekeeping forces had been seen participating in, or providing military and logistical support to, the punitive operation carried out by the Abkhaz separatist forces. Indeed, the peacekeeping force had established itself as a border guard between Abkhazia and the rest of Georgia, and the illegal Abkhaz border guard and customs officials operating freely near peacekeeping checkpoints had prevented the return of 300,000 internally displaced persons and refugees. On several occasions, the Acting Commander-in-Chief of the Peacekeeping Force had declared that Abkhazia was and always would be an integral part of the Russian Federation; indeed, 80 per cent of the population of Abkhazia had been illegally converted into citizens of the Russian Federation. The breakdown in the security situation in the area was seriously affecting the local Georgian population and returnees in the conflict zone. Between the peacekeeping forces' unwillingness to protect them and the paralysis of international organizations, refugees and internally displaced persons were easy targets for ethnic cleansing by Abkhaz separatists. Nevertheless, the situation had elicited a measured response in the Brahimi recommendations.

60. A transitional, joint Georgian-Abkhaz administration under the aegis of international organizations in the Gali district would be an important step towards restoring order and confidence between the parties to the conflict. It would also contribute to the steady return of refugees and internally displaced persons and be fully consistent with the recommendations of the Brahimi report concerning the integration of peace-building in peace operations and the establishment of transitional civil administrations in the settlement of "transnational conflicts". Those recommendations were of little use if they could not be implemented in the Abkhazia peace process. If responsibility for peacekeeping remained solely in the hands of one neighbouring — and far from impartial — big Power, despairing refugees and internally displaced persons might well resort to arms and violence as a means of returning home.

61. **Mr. Serdyukov** (Belarus), endorsing the statement made by the representative of Jordan on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, said that the momentum in the reform of the Organization's peacekeeping activities should be maintained. His delegation attached great importance to constructive trilateral cooperation between the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Secretariat in enhancing the planning, deployment and management of peacekeeping operations. It also continued to stress the importance of developing realistic and well thought-out mandates for peacekeeping missions that took account of local specificities and respected basic peacekeeping principles, namely the consent of the parties, impartiality and the non-use of force, except in self-defence.

62. Belarus had always supported the timely and effective use of preventive diplomacy. It was crucially important to strengthen consultations between the Security Council, the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries at all stages of planning and conducting peacekeeping operations, including by devising new mechanisms.

63. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations had made progress in implementing rapid deployment, which should be further enhanced, including by maximizing use of the United Nations Standby Arrangements System and establishing on-call lists of civilian police officers, ensuring a sound financial basis for the deployment of missions and use of strategic deployment stocks at the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi. Belarus also supported the rationalization of the procurement process by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to ensure efficiency, accountability and transparency.

64. His Government was making concerted efforts, including in the legislative domain, to boost the participation of Belarusian nationals in peacekeeping

operations of the United Nations and of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; it had recently taken steps to expand its involvement in non-military components and the United Nations Standby Arrangements System. Belarus looked forward to convening two-week training courses in 2003 to enhance national capacity and to establishing training facilities with support from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Despite difficulties associated with an economy in transition, Belarus was consistently striving to fulfil its obligations in respect of the financing of United Nations peacekeeping activities.

65. **Mr. Anwar** (Indonesia) noted with satisfaction the important contribution of United Nations peacekeeping operations to the maintenance of peace and the facilitation of post-conflict reconstruction in some areas. He called for the strengthening of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone as well as continuous financial support by the international community to meet the requirements for peace-building support in that country. He also welcomed Security Council resolution 1437 (2002) extending the mandate of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka until 15 December 2002, and announced the intention of his Government to contribute two engineering and technical units to the United Nations Observer Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Despite their success, however, United Nations peacekeeping missions continued to face daunting challenges, and some had become prolonged. Indonesia attached great importance to the formulation and implementation of viable exit strategies for those protracted missions.

66. Indonesia also attached great importance to respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States, as well as of non-intervention, in the use of peacekeeping operations. It was imperative that United Nations peacekeeping operations should not be used on the basis of partial or double standards; with the consent of the concerned parties, they should be deployed wherever required without delay.

67. He reaffirmed his delegation's support for the Brahimi reform process, which must adhere to the principles of transparency, effectiveness and efficiency. Any matters that might impede the reform process should be carefully addressed. The rapid deployment capability for peacekeeping operations must be strengthened; in that regard, he welcomed the development of the United Nations Standby Arrangements System, and its on-call list systems, by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, but specified that their implementation should take account of the needs and particular characteristics of troop-contributing countries.

68. His delegation welcomed the regular tripartite consultations between the troop-contributing countries, the Security Council and the Secretariat, and called for the further realization of the commitments to such consultations contained in Security Council resolution 1353 (2001) and the note of the President of the Security Council (S/2002/56). Indonesia attached particular importance to international cooperation in strengthening national capacity, and was of the view that international assistance for peacekeeping operations could be provided by regional organizations or individual countries in addition to the United Nations itself. Moreover, with the growing importance of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in dealing with regional conflicts, Indonesia encouraged the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to continue its study of the principles and mechanisms of such cooperation.

69. In light of the increasing role of civilian police in peacekeeping missions, his delegation welcomed the development by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of a rapidly deployable 100-person on-call police contingent, as well as the contribution of the United Nations Selection Assistance Team in providing assistance and advice to countries contributing police personnel. The possibility of using expertise as a criterion for inclusion in such an on-call list system, rather than simply relying on a count of names, should not be excluded. Finally, he reiterated the importance of expediting action on and reimbursement of the claims of countries contributing personnel and equipment to peacekeeping operations.

70. **Mr. Nik** (Malaysia) said that his country was ready to consider making further contributions to United Nations peacekeeping operations within its capability. In the context of the current sidelining for political reasons of some peacekeeping operations, he reiterated his delegation's view that peacekeeping was an essential activity of the United Nations and needed to be based on the principle of impartiality. The selection of mission leadership should also be an impartial and transparent process, based on such criteria as the candidates' credibility, capability,

experience in peacekeeping operations and the level of troop contribution by the country he or she represented, and should be carried out in accordance with established procedures and guidelines.

71. Noting the integral role of training in effective field performance, he said that Malaysia fully supported a coordinated approach to training for United Nations peacekeeping operations. The Malaysian Peacekeeping Training Centre in Port Dickson had successfully adopted the standardized generic training modules developed by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations as a basic pre-deployment requirement. To date, 36 military personnel from 16 countries had received training at the Centre; it was hoped that with further development of training modules for civilians and police personnel, the Centre would be able to serve the entire region. In the context of interregional cooperation between training centres, Malaysia was grateful for the training assistance it had received from the Training and Evaluation Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Norwegian Defence International Centre and the Canadian International Peacekeeping Training Centre. He also stressed the importance of training in civil-military relations (civil-military cooperation) for either traditional or complex missions.

72. **Mr. Gatilov** (Russian Federation), recalling that the maintenance of international peace and security was the primary purpose of the Organization, said that the United Nations had the necessary international legitimacy and experience to take collective measures to that end. The General Assembly and the Security Council had adopted a number of important decisions to enhance the peacekeeping potential of the United Nations; the international community now looked forward to practical results. His delegation welcomed the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/56/863) which reaffirmed the basic principles of peacekeeping, including the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security and the importance of strengthening cooperation with regional arrangements in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter.

73. The Charter clearly defined the key role of the Security Council at all stages of peacekeeping operations. The basic principle remained unchanged that any use of coercion or force on the part of the international community was admissible only with the Council's approval and under its control. It was equally clear that the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations would be enhanced if troop-contributing countries were properly consulted in accordance with existing Security Council decisions, including resolution 1353 (2001). Efforts should now focus on implementing the agreed measures, allowing them time to work, before considering the need for further improvements.

74. Preventive diplomacy had been shown to be a reliable tool for maintaining global stability, and was now more important than ever. It was vital to develop a comprehensive approach to maintaining international peace and security by closely linking peacekeeping operations with efforts for the political settlement of conflicts and ensuring a smooth transition to post-conflict peace-building.

75. His Government could not accept the notion of humanitarian intervention, in circumvention of the Charter. The way forward lay not in attempting to settle humanitarian problems by force, but in the further enhancement of United Nations peacekeeping and the development of multi-functional operations, including operations with humanitarian components. His delegation welcomed the progress made in enhancing the capability for the planning and conduct of peacekeeping operations. In that connection, the Special Committee and the Security Council Working Group of the Whole on Peacekeeping Operations had equal status and should thus be actively cooperating, not competing with each other.

76. Progress had been achieved in diversifying logistical support to peacekeeping operations and rationalizing the procurement process. His delegation assumed that, since the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other Secretariat units had received the full reinforcement requested, they would be able to carry out the functions entrusted to them in a fully satisfactory manner. At the same time, the continued shortage of troops, equipment and other logistical support remained a cause for concern. One of the most effective ways of addressing the lack of military expertise would be to strengthen the Military Staff Committee; his delegation proposed that, in accordance with Article 47, paragraphs 2 and 4 of the Charter, its composition should be broadened to include all the members of the Security Council as well as other interested countries, including troop-contributing countries. That initiative was not directed against the proposals of other countries and would not infringe on

the prerogatives of the Secretariat; instead, it would complement other measures under discussion.

77. The Russian Federation would continue to play an active role in enhancing the effectiveness of international peacekeeping. Currently Russian peacekeepers were participating in 11 of the 17 United Nations peacekeeping operations, and the Russian Federation was contributing to the United Nations Standby Arrangements System. At the same time, the Russian Federation continued to shoulder the main burden for peacekeeping in the area of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

78. **Mr. de Alba** (Mexico) said that in the light of the growing scope and complexity of United Nations peacekeeping responsibilities throughout the world, the time had come to speak not of peace-*keeping* operations but of *peace* operations, in a broad sense that reflected their multidimensional character. The explicit recognition by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations of that multidimensional character was an important step in that direction. The implications of that multidimensionality were far from having been fully assimilated, however, since the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and even the Secretariat were still not coordinating their work, they needed to participate more actively in the planning and conduct of peace operations and to coordinate their own efforts and policies with the other main bodies traditionally responsible for the planning and implementation of those operations.

79. It was clear that in order to achieve that level of coordination, policies and concepts needed to be thoroughly reviewed. As the sole forum at the United Nations responsible for comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations needed to strengthen its central role in defining policy. At the same time, however, the Special Committee had to recognize the need to coordinate its work with that of the Security Council, particularly with regard to operational aspects of peace missions and consulting mechanisms that included the contributing countries and the Secretariat. Similarly, coordination was needed between the Special Committee and the Security Council Working Group of the Whole on Peacekeeping Operations; the difficulties that continued to arise in that respect showed that in order to be effective, communications had to be two-way and not be limited to the mere presentation of reports.

80. There were other topics essential to the success of peace operations, on which the General Assembly and Security Council, through their respective subsidiary bodies, needed to maintain close communication. Of particular interest to his delegation were the incorporation of a gender perspective in peace operations, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, post-conflict reconstruction and development assistance. Mexico would continue to promote a constructive dialogue in that regard, with a view to building solid and lasting alliances for peace. Finally, he noted that in the broader context of peace operations, the number of contributing countries could well be increased, thereby enhancing their effectiveness. Mexico was evaluating its participation in peace operations in terms of that new reality.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 22 October 2002, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Maitland .... (South Africa)

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Agenda item 78: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 78: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*) (A56/863; A/C.4/57/L.8)

1. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) observed that there had been a tangible improvement in the core peacekeeping capacity of the United Nations. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations had emerged restructured and strengthened in many areas, enhancing its ability to plan and conduct peacekeeping operations and presumably giving it a better idea of the conditions for success.

2. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations had been grappling with such basic conditions as political support, rapid deployment and sound peace-building strategy, all of which involved Member States. It should continue to foster greater cooperation among the Security Council, the troop contributing countries and the United Nations system as a whole, and should monitor the implementation of its own recommendations.

3. Certain issues were of particular concern to Bangladesh. The political will of Member States to support peacekeeping at all stages was crucial: often, when peacekeeping operations had faltered, the political consensus in the Security Council had been wanting or too long in coming.

4. Furthermore, rapid deployment required well-trained and well-equipped troops; yet so few Member States regularly contributed troops. It was becoming more difficult for the Organization to secure the necessary forces, and the perceived lack of United Nations recognition of the dependable troop-contributing countries was certainly part of the problem. Bangladesh's commitment had always been strong, and it currently had 5,500 peacekeepers in 10 ongoing missions.

5. Another matter of concern was that the peace-building strategy needed in order to achieve the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants so crucial in the post-conflict period had in more than one instance been compromised by uncertainty as to the funding arrangements, which should be made more secure.

6. **Mr. Suanes Flexas** (Cuba) said that despite the complexity of the situations demanding the deployment of peacekeeping operations, the norms of international law must never be bent, especially the Charter principles of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States, and of non-interference in their internal affairs. The traditional standards for peacekeeping operations also remained valid: consent of the parties, impartiality, non-use of force except in self-defence, clearly defined mandates, objectives and command structures, and secure financing. All those basic ideas bore repeating, especially when there was talk of new concepts like so-called humanitarian interventions, which violated the principles of sovereignty and non-interference.

7. The United Nations must be able to have at its disposal dynamic mechanisms allowing a peacekeeping mission to become operational — in complete transparency and in strict observance of Articles 100 and 101 of the Charter — as soon as possible after the decision to deploy it. However, Cuba shared the concerns over the delayed reimbursement of States which contributed troops and equipment, especially where developing countries were concerned. An end must be put to the practice of siphoning off funds from the peacekeeping budget to pay for regular budget shortfalls.

8. Peacekeeping operations could not be considered definitive solutions to conflicts, which always stemmed from economic, political and social problems. Until the underlying causes were addressed, there would be a vicious circle of conflicts requiring the re-establishment of peace. Peace could not be separated from development. One of the greatest challenges to the United Nations was to allocate resources according to the legitimate demands of the vast majority of Member States and to use them where they were most needed.

9. A troubling discrimination could be perceived in the Security Council's deliberations and decisions on deployment of peacekeeping operations, the result being that there were privileged areas of the world, forgotten areas and off-limit areas. As long as that was the case, a world at peace would be a utopia.

10. **Mr. Kabtani** (Tunisia) said that, while his delegation welcomed the ceaseless efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to deal with urgent and complex situations, such efforts in and of themselves could not guarantee the success of peacekeeping operations unless accompanied by the

appropriate adaptation on the part of all other actors and partners. Tunisia favoured further discussions regarding the mechanism for consultation among the Secretariat, the Security Council, and the contributing countries, and urged avoidance of a selective approach that tended to limit participation in such discussions to large contingent contributors.

11. His delegation viewed the collaboration of the United Nations with regional organizations as being of primary importance, especially those in Africa. The African countries were determined to assume their responsibilities by tackling the underlying causes of conflicts. The support of the United Nations and the international community, however, was also required in order to create optimal conditions for success, especially with regard to the African Union and its Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.

12. Tunisia had participated in United Nations peacekeeping operations since the 1960s, and it intended to continue that policy.

13. **Mr. Fragelli** (Brazil) observed that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, having reviewed its procedures and adapted them to the new world situation and the challenges of increasingly complex peacekeeping operations, had instituted a thoroughgoing reform, which had involved changing its management culture, strengthening its strategic planning capacity and focusing on rapid response and deployment. The managerial reforms in the Department should strengthen the latter's relationship and consultations with troop-contributing countries, allow it to respond more quickly and adequately to the needs of the personnel in the field, particularly as regarded health and security, and foster greater dialogue with other Secretariat bodies. Cooperation between the Special Committee and the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations would be particularly useful, and would no doubt reinforce the growing exchange of information and ideas between the Security Council and the troop-contributing countries, which was already yielding a better understanding of the problems of each mission and suggesting possible alternative action.

14. Special attention should be given to reimbursement of the troop-contributing countries, since delayed payments to developing countries limited their ability to contribute personnel. His delegation was awaiting with interest the Secretariat report on the difficulties troop-contributing countries faced in complying with rapid deployment requirements, so that the recommendations for overcoming them could be discussed at the next session of the Special Committee.

15. The multidimensional nature of peacekeeping operations reflected the complexity of the conflicts involved. Peacekeeping should be seen not as an isolated intervention but as part of a process ranging from conflict prevention to promotion of internal political dialogue, humanitarian assistance, furtherance of human rights, institutional capacity-building, and post-conflict reconstruction of peace through economic and social development. Many multidisciplinary functions were involved: maintenance of security, civil defence humanitarian assistance and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. The role to be played by the civilian police and other civilian officials, who could be very helpful in post-conflict reconstruction, needed to be better defined. Peacekeeping training in particular must be improved, and Brazil was encouraged by the various Secretariat activities being carried out in that area.

16. **Mr. Niculescu** (Romania) said that misconduct by peacekeeping personnel only compounded the suffering of a traumatized local population. As part of the necessary zero tolerance policy for any departure from the code of conduct, a useful first step would be to attach an ombudsman to each United Nations mission to hear any local complaints; Member States could then discharge their responsibility for the conduct of their national contingents.

17. The safety and security aspects of peacekeeping missions had been constructively addressed in the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Scope of Legal Protection under the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. Solutions of the kind recommended by the Secretary-General should be put into effect.

18. Romania endorsed the work being done by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to develop standardized generic training modules, and welcomed the useful training seminars held in various regions. Bilateral training arrangements between potential troop-contributing countries had proved useful, and a regional approach would be worth considering.

19. To further the progress already made on mainstreaming a gender perspective in peacekeeping

operations, the senior level gender focal points should be appointed to United Nations missions. The declining participation of women in peacekeeping operations needed to be reversed. Furthermore, in conflict situations, the special needs of women and children had to be addressed, and special advisers on the matter should be assigned, where appropriate, to peacekeeping operations.

20. The presence of civilian police in specific peacekeeping operations had become essential, and the Secretariat should continue drafting rules and procedures for their participation, in close consultation with Member States.

21. The signing of memoranda of understanding prior to the deployment of any national contingents to peacekeeping missions was needed in order to ensure the timely reimbursement of the troop-contributing States. The Secretariat should find a way to make regular payments for personnel from the first month of a mission and should calculate an early equipment reimbursement payable at the end of the first six months.

22. The valuable experience of the Standby High Readiness Brigade should be shared, so that multinational brigades could be set up in future peacekeeping operations.

23. Romania — which was currently contributing military observers, special police units and civilian police to seven ongoing missions — intended to continue to be a contributor to peacekeeping operations.

24. **Ms. Pęksa-Krawiec** (Poland), paying tribute to all military and civilian United Nations peacekeeping personnel who had lost their lives for the cause, welcomed the progress made in strengthening the United Nations rapid deployment capacity, its planning and management of peace operations and the standardization of training for peacekeepers.

25 Poland would in the near future be signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Standby Arrangements System, and would be deploying one mechanized battalion to the Standby High Readiness Brigade. The use of strategic deployment stocks to support complex peacekeeping missions, together with rapid deployment and clear pre-mandate commitment authority, would significantly enhance the ability of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to launch timely peace missions. Further efforts were needed regarding the on-call lists and the standardization of logistics procedures, but the Department had prepared a useful handbook on standard operating procedures.

26. There should be greater cooperation between the United Nations and the regional organizations in the areas of peacekeeping, conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction, in order to avoid duplication.

27. Multifunctional peace operations required military observers, police and civilian experts, and Poland was continuing to improve its own internal procedures for the recruitment, training and deployment of such personnel, including special police units, disarmament experts, humanitarian workers, judges, border guards and administrative advisers. Currently, it was fielding a special police unit in Kosovo and would soon be contributing to the police operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It had, moreover, recently organized a regional course on civilian-police training with the participation of five Central European countries.

28. On the question of a gender perspective, it was a welcome fact that the role of women in peacekeeping and peace-building had expanded in the past two years. The gender advisers and child protection advisers currently appointed to some missions would help them work successfully.

29. The safety and security of peacekeeping personnel was a matter of the utmost priority. There should be a further comprehensive review of the effectiveness of measures ensuring their security, particularly in observer missions. United Nations forces should be able to defend themselves and all mission components under more robust rules of engagement; that would not be the same as the enforcement of peace, but would include all the peaceful means encompassed in the definition of self-defence under the Charter of the United Nations.

30. Aware of the paramount importance of troop contributions, Poland had joined the ongoing anti-terrorist operations in Afghanistan and continued its long-standing engagement in the Balkans and the Middle East, and it stood ready to continue to contribute to the cause of peace and security.

31. **Mr. Jalang'o** (Kenya) noted recent peacekeeping successes in Sierra Leone, Ethiopia/Eritrea and East

Timor. His Government had contributed troops to numerous peacekeeping operations and had been active in efforts for the peaceful settlement of disputes in Africa. He was, however, concerned about the level of United Nations commitment to the maintenance of international peace and security in Africa.

32. Despite recognition at the Millennium Summit of the need to maintain international peace and security, particularly in Africa, and the Security Council's commitment to giving equal priority to all regions of the world, with particular attention to the needs and characteristics of Africa, follow-up had been disappointing. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, deployment during the different phases of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had been slow and had failed to fill the security vacuum created by the withdrawal of foreign troops, leading to renewed ethnic clashes in the eastern part of the country. During consultations between troop-contributing countries and the Security Council, Member States had aired concerns about such security vacuums, the inability of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to police the entire country and the need for United Nations assistance. The Organization must address that problem urgently in order to guarantee the peace process and avoid another human catastrophe. In the Sudan and Somalia, a strong commitment on the part of the United Nations and the international community was likewise necessary to guarantee the success of peace talks and achieve reconciliation and a lasting solution.

33. Despite recent efforts to improve and accelerate reimbursement of troop costs and process contingent-owned equipment claims, delays in reimbursement and cash flow problems continued. It was essential that all Member States should meet their Charter obligations and pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions. Priority should be given to developing countries, particularly troop-contributing countries close to the mission area, for procurement of goods and services to support peacekeeping operations. Suppliers from those countries should be encouraged to offer goods and services to the United Nations.

34. He expressed concern that a situation seemed to be developing where troops were contributed by developing countries while the commanders were from the developed countries, and stressed that positions such as Force Commander, Deputy Force Commander and Chief of Staff should be reserved for contingents with a sizeable troop contribution. Although encouraged by efforts to activate the United Nations standby arrangements system, he said further consultations with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations were necessary to deal with the financial and logistical difficulties faced by troop-contributing countries.

35. He welcomed recent interest expressed by the United Nations and the group of eight major industrialized countries (G-8) in enhancing African peacekeeping capacity and looked forward to the long-delayed establishment of a working group on that issue, which must proceed on an urgent basis. His delegation also supported any effort to strengthen the protective legal regime for United Nations personnel. Host nations must in particular agree to make attacks against United Nations personnel crimes punishable by law.

36. **Mr. Heaton** (New Zealand) said that considerable progress had been made in improving the effectiveness of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Major changes were under way and in the future there should be greater focus on operations in the field. His delegation supported the Department's intention to focus on six outstanding issues: rapid deployment; enhancing African peacekeeping capacity; training; security reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; comprehensive rule of law strategies in the peacekeeping context; and best practices.

37. It was important, however, not to overlook such issues as staffing of key posts, clarification of both internal and external command and control of peace operations, increased transparency, safety and security of personnel and achieving at least minimal gender capacity, including the need for a gender adviser in the Department.

38. The Force Generation and Military Personnel Service's efforts to amend the standby arrangements system also needed to be followed up so as to reflect the recommendations of Member States. The importance of such efforts to improve efficiency must be clearly explained to the Fifth Committee.

39. The policy paper on command and control distributed in October 2001 should be examined in more detail by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Secretariat in order to clarify nuances and ensure that all parties fully understood the levels of authority and responsibility. The joint

meetings to improve transparency and coordination between the Security Council and troop-contributing countries were also most welcome. Similarly, more informal briefings by the Secretariat to keep troop-contributing countries informed should be held.

40. His delegation supported the development of rule-of-law strategies to facilitate the transition from peacekeeping to nation-building, as well as such initiatives as the partnership programme on peace-building and rule of law between the United Nations Association of the United States and Harvard University, and looked forward to distribution of the report of the Executive Committee on Peace and Security task force to develop rule-of-law strategies for peace operations. The Organization should work with national actors to ensure a robust transition to nation-building as the best guarantor of regional and international peace and security. He also joined with the representative of Jordan in stressing that peacekeepers must observe an acceptable code of conduct; Member States must ensure that personnel provided for peacekeeping duties were trained to the required levels.

41. **Mr. Strømmen** (Norway) said the seminar sponsored by his Government commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to be held at Headquarters on 29 October, would provide a timely opportunity to review lessons learned and reflect on the more fundamental challenges facing peacekeeping operations. Peace-building, for example, was a key component of efforts to deal with contemporary conflicts and he supported broadening the mandate of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations to include peace-building. At the operational level a number of missions had contained both peacekeeping and peace-building elements and that new complexity needed to be reflected in policy discussions.

42. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes illustrated the complexities of current peace operations because they contained both military and civilian components: troops and early planning and funding arrangements. Planning and funding problems had often caused setbacks in efforts to normalize the situation in conflict areas and he stressed the need to include disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in the early planning undertaken by the Integrated Mission Task Force. He also believed that the initial reintegration measures for demobilized troops should be funded through assessed contributions.

43. A seminar bringing together representatives of relevant actors involved in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration had been organized by his Government in Oslo earlier in 2002, with a follow-up planned for January 2003, with a view to establishing a pool of personnel for United Nations operations. While such initiatives would strengthen operational capacity, there was a need for greater strategic guidance and support for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

44. His delegation also supported the establishment of a gender focal point in the Department, and welcomed the Under-Secretary-General's emphasis on security-sector reform and rule-of-law strategies, which would require an innovative approach to improving coordination between military and development bodies while at the same time respecting existing roles and mandates. He also looked forward to the Best Practices Unit being fully staffed and operational by the end of 2002, and said troop-contributing countries should be involved in the identification of best practices.

45. His Government attached great importance to strengthening regional approaches to conflict management and, given the particular challenges in Africa, had focused its efforts on the development of peacekeeping and peace-building capacity in southern Africa through the training-for-peace programme since 1995. It remained committed to harmonizing bilateral efforts in that field. He welcomed the establishment of the new mechanism for consultation between the Council and troop-contributing countries, which must be fully implemented and further improved to make future meetings even more substantive and dynamic.

46. **Mr. Musambachime** (Zambia) noted with appreciation the decision to award the Dag Hammarskjold medal to peacekeepers who had lost their lives in the service of the United Nations.

47. He welcomed progress made on the issue of strategic development stocks as well as the elaboration of a new inventory-management system to be installed at the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi, and urged the Department to ensure fair geographical distribution of posts for those new systems. He expressed grave concern that, although the developing countries contributed the bulk of troops for United

Nations missions, they had not yet received their fair share of senior appointments, and wondered whether that was due to lack of confidence in contributing-country officers or favouritism towards the developed countries.

48. He noted for example that an officer from the developed world had been appointed to command the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea despite the fact that his country had contributed no troops, and requested that the Department should justify his appointment. Furthermore, the last five military advisers had all been from the developed world, and he felt it was time to give consideration to officers from the developing countries and wondered whether that post should be rotated among the regional groups. He also strongly supported increased gender capacity in the Department and noted that there were many capable female officers in the developing countries, including Zambia, who deserved consideration.

49. He appealed for adequate funding to complete the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The improved situation in the latter had brightened the prospects for peace and was an opportunity which should not be missed, and he called for full implementation of Phase III of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

50. **Mr. Beyendeza** (Uganda) supported the cause of peacekeeping and paid tribute to those who had given their lives in the service of the United Nations. In that context, he recalled that while there had been many successful missions, others had been disastrous, owing in large part to problems associated with delays in deployment and prevention.

51. Successful missions had enjoyed rapid allocation of resources and prompt deployment. Unsuccessful missions had been characterized by delays, leading to aggravation of the situation and increased suffering. He therefore stressed the need for the Security Council and the international community to act decisively and promptly and deploy adequate resources to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

52. It was also important to prevent conflicts by identifying and addressing the root causes: poor economic development, proliferation of small arms, ethnic clashes and poverty. There was a definite link between peace and development, and existing mechanisms to promote democracy, good governance and the rule of law should be strengthened. Resources should be mobilized, political support provided and preventive action taken in a timely fashion in order to promote sustainable peace and durable institutions in situations where instability prevailed. Such efforts would contribute to the success of peacekeeping operations and create a framework for sustainable peace in conflict situations.

53. **Ms. Ognjanovac** (Croatia) said that Croatia fully supported the recommendations of the Brahimi report (A/55/305-S/2000/809) and was committed to their implementation. It also supported the reform of the existing relations among the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Economic and Social Council in the context of peacekeeping operations, and welcomed the beginning of that process in the Economic and Social Council's involvement in post-conflict management in Africa and in the strengthened consultation of the Economic and Social Council with the Security Council.

54. Croatia was currently participating in peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone, Ethiopia and Eritrea, and Kashmir, and, with a view to intensifying its participation, was taking steps to develop the appropriate government policies and decision-making. Besides developing its own military units for participation in peacekeeping operations, Croatia was also open to joint participation in such operations with other States.

55. The Government had recently approved a Memorandum of Understanding with regard to the United Nations standby arrangements system, under which it would make available over 100 military observers, officers, weapons experts and police personnel, most of whom would be placed on the on-call list. Croatia would continue to support efforts to strengthen the military-expertise capabilities of the Department. It was also participating in the development of standardized generic training modules, with special emphasis on the implementation of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programmes. Intensive preparations were proceeding in that regard at the International Military Operations Centre in Zagreb, involving training programmes for staff officers, military observers and civilian-military cooperation. Croatia intended to make the Centre available for participants from other States as well.

56. **Mr. Bozay** (Turkey) noted with satisfaction the recent achievements in enhancing the capacities of peacekeeping operations on the basis of the Brahimi report. He called for additional concrete steps to be taken to enhance the rapid-deployment capacity — to that end, Turkey had joined the United Nations standby arrangements system and the military on-call list — and welcomed the realization of the strategic deployment stocks concept. In addition, he called for enhanced cooperation between the Secretariat and the Member States, with special attention to the logistics dimension of rapid deployment, and looked forward to receiving information on the new inventory-management system during the next session of the Special Committee.

57. Welcoming the proposed formation of coherent brigade-sized forces, especially those composed of troops from countries in the same geographical region, he cited the successful example of the South-Eastern Europe Brigade, a recently formed multinational peace force that stood ready for cooperation within the United Nations framework. He also expressed Turkey's support for increasing the capacity of the Civilian Police Division and for creating an on-call list for civilian police.

58. Recalling the vital importance of training for the success of peacekeeping operations, he welcomed the ongoing development of standardized generic training modules. He said that Turkey had established its own training centre in Ankara under the Partnership for Peace programme, and was ready to use it as a means of enhancing the training capacity for United Nations peacekeeping. Turkey also welcomed efforts to develop training capacities within peacekeeping missions themselves.

59. There was a need for a thorough analysis of the rule of law dimension of peacekeeping operations; it was vital for the United Nations to consult much more closely with the authorities in the countries concerned so as not to impose a particular rule-of-law modality on them.

60. Over the previous half century, Turkey had taken part in peacekeeping operations in many places around the world, most recently in Afghanistan with the International Security Assistance Force, and remained willing to share the experience gained in those operations with all countries wishing to benefit from it.

61. **Mr. Jaiswal** (India) said that India's participation in peacekeeping reflected its commitment to the strengthening of the United Nations system and international peace and security. To date, India had contributed over 58,000 troops to peacekeeping operations in a number of missions worldwide. Although over 100 Indian peacekeepers had died in the line of duty, India's sense of obligation remained unwavering.

62. The latest report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/56/863) showed that the Committee continued to offer practical recommendations for peacekeeping operations. India had been involved in the mechanism for strengthening cooperation among the Security Council, the troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat, which still required further work. Periodic, sustained and meaningful interaction with troop-contributing countries was more likely to have a positive impact on the decisions of the Security Council.

63. India supported the recommendation in the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809) with respect to the deployment of peacekeeping operations within 30 or 90 days after the adoption of a mandate, depending on the complexity of operations. In support of efforts to develop the concept of a generic mission headquarters, India had pledged a brigade and 60 officers for the on-call list. With regard to the deployment of civilian police, he believed Member States should formulate innovative approaches to enable more effective deployment. India would continue to cooperate with other States and the Secretariat to that end.

64. The build-up of strategic deployment stocks to equip the Secretariat for complex missions, by pre-positioning equipment at the Logistics Base at Brindisi, would undoubtedly be beneficial to a large number of troop-contributing countries which were unable to deploy fully equipped and self-sustained troops. The timely availability of strategic air- and sea-lift capabilities was critical to the success of rapid deployment and would better serve the cause of peacekeeping.

65. He noted progress in the development of standardized generic training modules. Global norms for peace operations, ideally developed by the United Nations in consultations with Member States, should be acceptable to and achievable by all States and

international organizations. India was pleased to host an international course, in collaboration with the Training and Evaluation Service of the Department, for emerging troop-contributing countries. The course would provide an excellent opportunity for sharing experiences and understanding the various facets of United Nations peacekeeping.

66. His delegation was encouraged to note that the process for reimbursing expenditures and equipment was under improvement, as unpaid costs created a tremendous strain for developing countries. In its case, India was owed approximately $65 million.

67. His Government welcomed efforts to enhance the peacekeeping capacity of African countries, and the transparency that had characterized recent appointments to the Department. However, the disproportionately high percentage of developing countries as troop contributors was untenable. The lack of political will among some Member States detracted from the universal character of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Those States also lay themselves open to charges of maintaining double standards by being willing to contribute to operations in Europe but reluctant to do so in Africa. Apart from the political aspect, there was the question of capacity. India was prepared to engage in frank discussion of that issue at the next session of the Special Committee and looked forward to continued dialogue with other Member States.

68. **Mr. Vankham** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) recalled the need for strict observance of the principles of national sovereignty and territorial integrity in all peacekeeping operations, as well as the perennial importance of the basic principles of peacekeeping, namely the consent of the parties, impartiality and the non-use of force except in self-defence. Considerable progress had been made in achieving a rapid-deployment capacity, largely thanks to the $140 million approved by General Assembly resolution 56/292 for the creation of strategic deployment stocks. His delegation supported efforts to achieve a deployment capacity within 30 days, or 90 days for complex emergencies, and endorsed plans to enhance the United Nations standby arrangements system and develop the concept of generic mission headquarters.

69. He urged Member States to pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions, in order to facilitate timely reimbursement of troop-contributing countries. The standardized generic training modules and the Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations were welcome developments, though the Best Practices Unit must be provided with adequate staffing. Pursuant to the relevant United Nations resolutions, further steps should be taken to improve the representation of under-represented and unrepresented Member States in the Department. He also called for developed countries to show greater commitment to peacekeeping operations by contributing more troops.

70. **Mr. Scott** (Australia) welcomed the progress made in implementing the recommendations in the Brahimi report, particularly with regard to the enhanced planning and management of peacekeeping operations, the increased speed of deployment and the trend towards realistic mandates, backed up by adequate resources. However, fresh ideas were needed to ensure that the Committee, as well as the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, continued to play a useful role in the ongoing reforms. He warned against the Committee's becoming too preoccupied with the review of details of the report, and thus failing to see the bigger picture. The Committee should provide broad guidelines and advice, without adding to the burden of paperwork or adopting new recommendations before existing ones were implemented. Such an approach would allow the Special Committee to work creatively and cooperatively with the Secretariat. For its part, the Secretariat should consider periodically, and certainly ahead of substantive sessions of the Special Committee, on which key issues it would value guidance from the Special Committee.

71. A number of refinements were needed in the management and conduct of peacekeeping operations. Shortcomings with regard to recruitment and succession planning in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had led to several gaps in crucial positions, eroding the Department's ability to respond to fresh challenges. Enhanced coordination between conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace-building activities should become a major consideration for the Special Committee. In particular, a successful transition from peacekeeping to post-conflict recovery depended on the level of support for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. It would be useful to learn from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the

Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) whether they were comfortable with the current doctrine and guidance they received on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and whether they would appreciate further assistance from the Special Committee. His delegation supported a more holistic approach concerning the rule of law and administration of justice, and the vacancy in the D-2 post for a police adviser continued to restrict progress on civilian-police matters. The Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit must be adequately staffed and empowered to contribute actively to peacekeeping planning and management.

72. In the context of work being done in the Sixth Committee concerning the scope of legal protection of United Nations personnel, the Special Committee should take note of the recommendation that key provisions of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel should be incorporated into status-of-forces, status-of-mission and host-country agreements. In the longer term, it should also consider the "declaration of risk" requirement in article 1 (c) (ii) of the Convention, which arbitrarily denied legal protection to the majority of United Nations operations.

73. **Mr. Ayudhaya** (Thailand) said that the universality and impartiality of the United Nations were fundamental to its work in the maintenance of international peace and security. Multilateral action was the only viable approach to resolving volatile conflict situations. While he welcomed the development of standard training materials and courses by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, which would enable troops to be better prepared for peacekeeping tasks, efforts should also be focused on in-mission training. In that context, his country had co-hosted the first United Nations Training Assistance Team/Mission Training Cell Officers Course in September 2002.

74. Given the importance of rapid deployment to mission success, it was encouraging to note the strengthening of the United Nations standby arrangements system. Nevertheless, the commitment of Member States as well as adequate material and financial support remained crucial for eventual success. He asked for greater transparency in the recruitment of personnel to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, particularly with regard to senior appointments. His country attached great importance to the timely reimbursement of troop costs and contingent-owned equipment. While he welcomed improvements in that regard, he urged Member States to pay assessed contributions on time, in full and without conditions, in order to avoid unfair burdens on troop-contributing countries. It would also be useful to hear of progress made in processing death and disability compensation claims. The safety and security of peacekeepers remained a matter of considerable concern. Consequently, the capacity of the Secretariat to conduct risk assessments needed to be strengthened, and the relevant information disseminated swiftly to prospective troop-contributing countries. Precautionary measures and guidelines should be drawn up to provide peacekeepers with the tools to evaluate and conduct their work safely.

75. The United Nations should cooperate with regional organizations and countries willing to engage in peacekeeping efforts, by finding ways and means to facilitate their participation. It should attach more importance to public information, by fostering closer links between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Public Information. Successful missions were contingent on public support at the international and local levels. Lastly, he recalled that peacekeeping was only a last resort when initiatives to address the root causes of conflict failed.

76. **Mr. Khalid** (Pakistan) reiterated Pakistan's support for Security Council resolution 1353 (2001) and other measures and mechanisms established for strengthening cooperation between the Security Council and troop-contributing countries. He further called for the development of an integrated approach in planning and management, involving troop-contributing countries as integral stakeholders at each stage of peacekeeping operations. If the restoration of peace and stability was to be achieved through bolstering economies, donors should honour their pledges for reconstruction and recovery. He therefore appealed to donors to carefully assess their potential contribution to peace-building before making pledges; and once made, those pledges should be converted to disbursable funds at the earliest.

77. In developing exit strategies for future missions, the Security Council resolution which originally mandated the respective mission must be fully implemented, and objective criteria on the basis of which the operation had been mandated must be

achieved. Failure to adhere to either of those principles would defeat the purpose of the mission.

78. The pitfalls of undertaking half-hearted peacekeeping operations were enormous. He related the experience of Jammu and Kashmir which, in his opinion, illustrated the international community's failure to fulfil its commitment to the people of that region. No sustained effort had been made by the United Nations to resolve the root causes of the conflict. The international community must demonstrate sufficient political will to prevent a conflict in South Asia and to resolve the Kashmir dispute.

79. He paid tribute to the peacekeepers who had lost their lives in the cause of peace and in the service of the United Nations. Pakistan was pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution on the declaration of the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, and was committed to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects.

80. **Mr. Ouologuem** (Mali) said that Mali remained committed to the success of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Malian military officers and civilian police had participated in a number of such missions, particularly in Africa. His Government had also underwritten and regularly made resources available to the United Nations standby arrangements system.

81. Mali fervently hoped that Security Council consultations with troop-contributing countries would take their concerns into account in its decision-making. The recent action taken by the African Union for the establishment of the Council of Peace and Security represented an important step in creating a collective-security and rapid-alert system. Mali had already taken steps to ratify the establishing protocol.

82. Mali urged the strengthening of the capacities of regional mechanisms and supported the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa as a coordination mechanism with other subregional partners in the areas of conflict prevention and peace-building. His Government also supported the Special Committee's recommendation to create the post of Director of Management in the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

83. **Mr. Elashhi** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the African continent had suffered the most from civil and regional wars. His delegation welcomed the success achieved in some African countries, such as Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Eritrea. It welcomed also the fact that the Security Council was paying more attention to the African region and had established the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, which was playing an important peacekeeping role. Financial assistance should be provided for similar organizations so that they could fully assume their role.

84. His delegation commended the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/56/863) and that of the Secretary-General (A/56/732) concerning strengthening Africa's ability to keep peace. It welcomed the suggestion in paragraph 39 of document A/56/863 for the establishment of a second logistics base for strategic stocks in Africa. It recommended the establishment of a liaison office at the African Union's headquarters in Addis Ababa, similar to the one planned for Brussels, and of a mechanism for coordination between the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Security Council Ad Hoc Working Group on Africa. It recommended also a better coordination between the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, the administration of peacekeeping operations and the African Union with regard to peacekeeping efforts and to finding appropriate ways to train African troops. It urged a careful examination of requests from African countries for establishing peacekeeping forces and providing them with material and logistical support, as in central Africa.

85. The Security Council had also a great responsibility for securing peace in the occupied Palestinian territories. It had utterly failed to prevent the daily massacres committed by the occupying forces and the siege imposed on a whole population. Its resolutions had not succeeded in stopping the occupation of Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories. The continued occupation might well breed more fanaticism and violence.

86. **Mr. Al-Otaibi** (Kuwait) said that peacekeeping operations played a vital role in defusing tensions, and noted that current missions were different from previous ones in that they provided humanitarian

assistance, monitored human rights violations, undertook police duties and assisted in the building of State institutions. Those operations were essential for the maintenance of international peace and security.

87. There were still some pending issues to be addressed in order to reinforce peacekeeping operations. There was a need to identify clearly the objectives and command structure of all operations and to strengthen coordination between the Security Council and the troop-contributing countries, so that it included the various phases of peacekeeping operations. The role of the United Nations in terms of early warning and preventive diplomacy should be reinforced. It was also necessary to have Member States comply with Article 17 of the Charter by assuming the expenses of the Organization as apportioned by the General Assembly, while taking into consideration the special responsibility of the permanent members of the Security Council. Training needs should also be addressed comprehensively.

88. The United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM), established in 1991, had been welcomed by Kuwait. That mission had contributed greatly to reducing tension on the border, leading to more security and stability; however, Iraq's non-compliance with Security Council resolutions was a matter of concern. In 1993, Kuwait had voluntarily assumed two thirds of the UNIKOM budget so as to alleviate any financial difficulties. Kuwait had also financed other peacekeeping missions. Furthermore, Kuwait had provided UNIKOM with various civil and military facilities. Kuwait had also built close working relations with UNIKOM commanders and troops, featuring continuing coordination, including the establishment of a liaison office.

89. **Mr. Hussein** (Ethiopia) said that his delegation appreciated the efforts made by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and his staff to address structural deficiencies, in view of the limited resources available for the expanding mandate of peacekeeping missions. It was a timely response to the multi-dimensional role of United Nations peacekeepers, which ranged from disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to institution-building in post-conflict societies.

90. The establishment of a triangular partnership involving the Security Council, the troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat would help to enhance cooperation, but needed to be further strengthened. Moreover, the consent of the concerned party and the impartiality of the peacekeepers had to be strictly observed.

91. Misconduct among peacekeepers, particularly by the political and military leadership, was a growing threat to the Organization's credibility and efficiency. Partiality, politicization of local issues and misinformation were bound to fuel misunderstanding.

92. Ethiopia welcomed the Under-Secretary-General's initiative to develop disciplinary regulations to punish persons accused of gross misconduct, who should be amenable to the jurisdiction of the host country or the contributing country. The scope should, however, be expanded to encompass misconduct by leaders of peacekeeping operations, and there should be frank dialogue between Member States and the Secretariat on that delicate and complex issue.

93. Ethiopia also supported efforts to create specific training programmes and standardized generic training modules. Short-term regional training for civilian police and military officers needed to be further strengthened and expanded to meet pre-deployment needs. As an emerging troop-contributing country, Ethiopia noted with great satisfaction that regional seminars had been conducted by the Training and Evaluation Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

94. However, there was greater need for cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations for the maintenance of international peace and security. Ethiopia therefore attached great importance to collaboration with the African Union, particularly in the areas of training and information exchange. His Government was pleased to learn that the Secretariat had extended assistance to enhance the early-warning system of the African Union. However, much remained to be done with regard to capacity-building in the Union, with a view to strengthening its mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution.

95. As a founding Member of the United Nations, Ethiopia wished to reaffirm its faith in the maintenance of international peace and security. It had enthusiastically participated in missions in Asia and Africa under the United Nations banner and remained committed to a continued role in the maintenance of peace and security.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 24 October 2002, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Maitland .... (South Africa)

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Agenda item 78: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 78: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Fallouh** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that United Nations peacekeeping endeavours represented an important tool for maintaining international peace and security, in addition to reducing tensions and resolving disputes. Success had been achieved in Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste and Bosnia and Herzegovina. He affirmed that peacekeeping operations should be limited in time and should lead to the application of international resolutions. Such operations should comply with the principles of the United Nations Charter, which entailed obtaining the consent of the parties, using force only in self-defence, neutrality and respect for national sovereignty.

2. The United Nations had begun its peacekeeping operations in the Middle East approximately half a century earlier. It was regrettable that peace in the Middle East was still far off, since Israel was continuing its occupation of Arab lands, its expansionist, settlement and imperialist policies, and its repression of Arab human rights in the occupied territories.

3. The Syrian Arab Republic lauded the sacrifices made by peacekeeping commanders and troops to preserve peace in the Middle East. It welcomed the positive relations existing between Syrian officials and those of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine (UNTSO) and the United Nations Disengagement Observation Force (UNDOF), and between the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

4. His delegation wished to raise the question of procurement at the United Nations in general, and in respect of peacekeeping operations in particular. Despite the progress made, it still seemed that most procurement was made from developed countries; his delegation affirmed the need to increase procurement from developing countries. It also believed that the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1353 (2001) and the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2002/56) of 14 January 2002 would contribute to reinforcing cooperation between the Council, the Secretariat and the troop-contributing countries in terms of planning, preparing and organizing missions.

5. **Mr. Menelaou** (Cyprus) said that lessons learned from the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) highlighted the need for greater effectiveness and rapid deployment. Peacekeeping operations were of long duration only when there was no effective peacemaking. Despite several United Nations resolutions and successive initiatives by Secretaries-General, there had been no progress on the issue of Cyprus, owing essentially to a lack of political will on the Turkish Cypriot side. As the Security Council had indicated in July, despite the direct talks begun in January, the Turkish Cypriot side had failed to take a constructive approach and declined to help resolve core issues. For the third consecutive year, the Turkish occupation army had advanced its positions along the ceasefire line in the area of Strovilia, resulting in what the Secretary-General described as a clear violation of the status quo. Two days earlier, his Government had been informed of further provocations by the Turkish army in the same area. Turkey's refusal over the years to heed Security Council resolutions calling for the restoration of the military status quo ante and the inability of UNFICYP to intervene reflected negatively on the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping.

6. As a demonstration of its political will to reach a peaceful solution, his Government had put forward a proposal for mine clearance within the buffer zone and had indicated to UNFICYP and the United Nations Mine Action Service that it would proceed unilaterally if necessary. It had also destroyed 4,500 small arms in accordance with the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and voluntarily contributed one third of the UNFICYP budget plus facilities and services. The Turkish Cypriot community would stand to gain from the demilitarization proposal of President Clerides, which would free resources for reconstruction of the island.

7. In conclusion, his delegation paid tribute to the sacrifices of United Nations personnel in the cause of peace and expressed its gratitude to the troop-contributing countries and to UNFICYP, particularly for its role in facilitating contacts between the Greek and Turkish communities, such as the extremely

successful special event organized on 21 October to mark United Nations Day.

8. **Ms. Bolaños** (Guatemala) said that the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) had been a catalysing element which had facilitated her country's transition to peace within the broad terms of its mandate. Its presence had been hailed by Guatemala's President, Mr. Portillo, as the "critical conscience of the State".

9. While recognizing the progress achieved in peacekeeping reform, she singled out rapid deployment and information management and analysis as key aspects of work that remained to be done. Her delegation was in favour of the ongoing consultations between the Secretariat and Member States in that regard and invited the Secretariat to continue the process with a view to meeting funding, equipment and personnel needs. She also urged the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to continue cooperating with the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator in order to achieve further progress in planning, personnel training and the provision of reliable equipment to diminish the risk of accident and illness.

10. **Mr. Malick** (Senegal) welcomed the progress achieved in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1353 (2001), including the birth of Timor-Leste, the imminent completion of the work of the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH), closer cooperation between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and African regional and subregional organizations and the effective work of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). In that connection, he called for stronger cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union and subregional organizations in conflict prevention, management and settlement. International support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development would also help to promote peace and good governance in Africa.

11. His delegation attached particular importance to maintaining order and the rule of law and to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. It welcomed growing efforts by African countries to consolidate the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national level and called for greater support for regional and subregional crisis prevention and settlement mechanisms. Urgent measures must be taken to incorporate disarmament, demobilization and integration into peacekeeping operations. Tangible results could be achieved by taking into account the efforts of all the various actors, including the Economic and Social Council Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries emerging from conflicts, the Security Council ad hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, and input from civil society. In particular, new partnerships should be forged in the areas of early warning, human resources development and national capacity-building. Coordinating the activities of those structures would be the key to success.

12. In conclusion, he stressed the importance of timely reimbursement of troop-contributing countries and said that his delegation endorsed the Special Committee's recommendations to that effect. He urged Member States to fulfil their financial obligations in that regard, in accordance with Article 17 of the Charter of the United Nations.

13. **Mr. Hassan** (Nigeria) said that although Nigeria was gratified by the recent successes of peacekeeping operations in such places as Timor-Leste, Sierra Leone, Eritrea and Ethiopia, and Prevlaka, it agreed that much remained to be done. The increase in intra- and inter-State conflicts, particularly in Africa, and the resulting proliferation of small arms and light weapons, was of grave concern, as was the rising tide of terrorism around the globe, which had a negative impact on the social, economic and political life of many countries.

14. His delegation was particularly concerned about the rising tension in the Manu River Union region, and the strife in Côte d'Ivoire and in the Great Lakes region. Nigeria reiterated its call for a comprehensive peace strategy in the Manu River Union region. In its view, a holistic security plan for the entire West African subregion would be more fruitful than the ad hoc approach currently taken by the United Nations. It also reiterated its call for enhanced support to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), and strongly urged that the deployment and implementation of its phase III tasks should begin in the next several weeks.

15. Nigeria supported the restructuring of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and called on the Secretariat to step up its efforts to train and retrain new and existing staff members. In that regard, his

delegation looked forward to the status report in the next report of the Secretary-General. Nigeria fully agreed with the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations that the Department must focus on the critical areas of peacekeeping that would ensure ultimate success.

16. Nigeria supported the expansion of the on-call lists, which in its view were the ideal means of achieving rapid deployment in United Nations missions, and had already forwarded its nominations. His delegation was deeply disappointed by the selective deployment of critical enablements and specialist units to the peacekeeping missions, which had resulted in delays and weakened capacities, particularly at MONUC. The maintenance of peace and security was a collective responsibility, and required cooperation and transparent partnership: in that regard, he urged Member States to exercise the political will to furnish such enablements.

17. As a major African troop-contributing country, Nigeria was gratified by the attention being given to the enhancement of African peacekeeping capacities, and supported the recommendation that concrete proposals should be formulated in 2003. In addition, it believed that providing well-equipped, well-trained peacekeepers in Africa should be a major preoccupation of the Committee, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and partners. In that respect, it strongly urged the Secretary-General to convene a working group to submit a report for consideration by Member States; consultations with regional organizations should also be undertaken.

18. The provision of training was critical, in view of the unfortunate events that had occurred in Somalia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. In that regard, Nigeria commended the Training and Evaluation Service for the progress it had made in finalizing the Standardised Generic Training Modules (SGTM), welcomed the various related initiatives, and looked forward to a detailed description of that system in the next report of the Secretary-General.

19. Nigeria also welcomed the report of the system-wide task force on rule of law strategies to the Executive Committee on Peace and Security, and believed that the involvement of governmental, non-governmental and intergovernmental bodies was indispensable for an effective and well-coordinated rule of law strategy. It also welcomed the restructuring and strengthening of the Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, and believed that its role should be extended to include components of current missions, with a view to drawing lessons for future use. It commended the Best Practices Unit for formulating the Handbook on UN Multi-dimensional Peacekeeping Operations despite its skeletal staff.

20. Although his delegation was delighted by the improved pace of reimbursements to the troop-contributing countries, it urged the payment of all reimbursements in order to enable such countries to meet their administrative and operational commitments in peacekeeping operations. In the same vein, it called on all Member States to pay their outstanding contributions to the United Nations on time, in full, and without conditions, which was necessary if the Organization was to meet its global obligations to maintain peace and security.

21. Nigeria welcomed the appointment of new military advisers from Netherlands and Nigeria, and, in that regard, hoped that more troop-contributing countries, as well as more underrepresented and unrepresented Member States, would have the opportunity to fill posts in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Recruitment should be conducted in accordance with the principles of transparency, geographical representation and gender balance; all vacancies should be advertised so as to ensure that candidates from all Member States were accorded equal opportunities. In addition, senior military positions in the field should be occupied by senior officers with national contingents in those missions.

22. **Mr. Lamba** (Malawi) said that his delegation was also pleased with the progress made by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in carrying out some of the major recommendations of the Brahimi report. In addition, Malawi commended the Department for the tasks it had performed in Sierra Leone, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Afghanistan, and affirmed its continued support for peacekeeping activities, recalling that it had participated in peacekeeping operations in Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Kosovo. Despite broad recognition for the need to institutionalize the culture of prevention within the United Nations system and within the context of regional cooperation, much peacekeeping work still occurred after the fact. There was a compelling need to

shift from reaction to prevention, through vigilance and rapid deployment.

23. In order to ensure the safety and security of United Nations and associated personnel deployed in peacekeeping missions, a mechanism must urgently be established to investigate attacks against them and to prosecute the perpetrators. That could only be achieved, however, with the cooperation and support of States hosting peacekeeping missions. Malawi was concerned about the incidents of indiscipline and misconduct among some peacekeeping personnel, and welcomed the Under-Secretary-General's proposals for tightened discipline and appropriate consultations with relevant Member States. Intensive pre-assignment briefings and orientation seminars, as well as a code of conduct for field personnel, would also be important. His delegation welcomed the idea that the troop-contributing countries and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should work together on matters involving discipline, reimbursement for troop costs and contingent-owned equipment, and rapid deployment. The Security Council should coordinate closely with troop-contributing countries on the matter of strategic deployment stocks. In Malawi's experience, the time lag between selection and deployment had been unpleasantly long.

24. The international community should devote more attention and resources to developing Africa's own peacekeeping capacities, since that was the region of the world most affected by conflicts and civil wars. In that regard, he recalled the commendable performance of African regional groups in resolving conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Rwanda, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The work of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations would be enhanced by collaboration with regional groups and local players, with financial and other support from the United Nations. Malawi welcomed the establishment of the Open-ended Ad hoc Working Group of the General Assembly on the Causes of Conflict and Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa. However, it believed that African military, police and other experts should be added to the Headquarters staff of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

25. His delegation supported the call for adequate training for peacekeepers: the promotion of technical competence and an appreciation of local cultural and political dynamics should greatly enhance mutual cooperation, trust and respect between peacekeepers and local authorities and populations. Malawi joined with other delegations in paying special tribute to the men and women who had been keeping peace around the world; it also commended those who had sacrificed their lives or been injured in the line of duty.

26. **Mr. Sharma** (Nepal) said that in a globalized world, the destiny of all nations and peoples were intertwined: terrorists and thugs moved between nations as easily as did traders and tourists. Since 1958, Nepal had contributed nearly 40,000 military and police personnel to peacekeeping missions around the globe, many of them complex and dangerous, and 43 Nepalese had laid down their lives in the line of duty. Despite major reforms, however, the United Nations peacekeeping record was mixed. The successes of peacekeeping operations in the past year had been heartening; the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had benefited from new posts and improved gender and geographical balances, and many developing countries had increased the level of troop self-sustainment. Much, however, remained to be done. The Security Council was insufficiently transparent, and conducted too few consultations with troop-contributing countries. Many missions lacked clear performance benchmarks and exit strategies; and many were ill planned or ill managed. Four major concerns had emerged: inappropriate behaviour by peacekeepers; the exclusion of poor countries whose troops were not self-sustaining; delays in reimbursements for troops and equipment costs; and, most importantly, the appointment of senior officials from developed nations, while poor nations did the dangerous work.

27. To address those serious issues, the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations must be fully implemented. Clear rules of engagement and a code of conduct for troops and other personnel must be established. The United Nations must continue efforts to help developing countries to train troops and to maintain rapid deployment capacity; it must accord priority to poor countries in the reimbursement of troop and equipment costs; and it must quicken the pace of recruitment for vacant posts, ensuring fair, balanced representation of nationals from all countries in senior positions. The Security Council should strive to improve its consultations and coordination with troop-contributing countries, in accordance with its resolution 1353 (2001). Member States must pay their dues on time, in full and without conditions. The issue

of safety and security for peacekeepers, and the structure of entitlements and compensation for peacekeepers, must be reviewed. An environment of genuine cooperation must be developed between the troop-contributing countries, the Security Council and the Secretariat. In the building of peace, emphasis must be placed on prevention.

28. **Ms. Antonijević** (Yugoslavia) said that her delegation welcomed the note of the President of the Security Council of 14 January 2002 on enhancing the existing mechanism for cooperation between troop-contributing countries, the Security Council and the Secretariat. A fully operational Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, scheduled for the end of the year, would boost the strategic planning and analysis capability of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. It was equally important to foster cooperation between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other parts of the Secretariat. Her delegation also urged the Secretariat to continue both its work towards rapid and effective deployment and its consultations with Member States in that regard.

29. The elements of the new broader and more complex peacekeeping missions should be clearly defined in peacekeeping mandates. Cooperation between the United Nations and regional arrangements would be helpful to that end, provided that their respective competences were clear and did not overlap.

30. Yugoslavia was prepared to contribute troops and civilian police to peacekeeping operations. It had recently provided military observers to the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISET). As host country to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), it believed strongly that the United Nations and host countries must cooperate in order to deal effectively with core issues of conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction. Yugoslavia had undertaken a number of specific measures to assist UNMIK in fulfilling its mandate, in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) and, in 2001, had signed the joint document which formed the basis for that cooperation.

31. **Mr. Droba** (Slovakia) welcomed the progress made in many aspects of rapid deployment. While his delegation supported recent changes in the United Nations Standby Arrangements System, it could not allocate units for that purpose before completing the current process of revamping its own armed forces.

32. Slovakia's commitment to participating in multinational peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance operations was enshrined in the military strategy recently adopted by its Parliament. Despite the demanding tasks of the ongoing reform of its armed forces, Slovakia provided troops, military observers and equipment to seven United Nations peacekeeping operations. With more than 600 personnel currently deployed, its participation had increased more than six-fold in the past three years. Its infantry units participated in two important missions — UNFICYP and UNDOF. His delegation welcomed, in particular, the most recent progress report of the Secretary-General on Ethiopia and Eritrea of 30 August (S/2002/977) and was particularly pleased that its demining unit in the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) had been chosen to perform the main demining tasks in support of demarcating the border. It was also pleased to have been able to provide level II hospital facilities to the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET/UNMISET). The Slovak Parliament had also recently adopted legislation providing for the participation of Slovak civilian police officers to peacekeeping operations.

33. In conclusion, he welcomed the Special Committee's recommendation to designate 29 May as the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers. As a country which had lost a number of soldiers serving under the United Nations flag, Slovakia fully supported, and was a sponsor of, the draft resolution submitted by Ukraine entitled "International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers" (A/C.4/57/L.8).

34. **Mr. De Silva** (Sri Lanka) said that peacekeeping operations must respect the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence of States and non-intervention in their domestic affairs and must be conducive to an eventual political settlement. In order to ensure success, they should be carefully planned and budgeted and have a clearly defined and realistic mandate which reflected the new emphasis on reconciliation, establishment of democratic institutions, human rights, the rule of law and the mobilization of international economic assistance to promote peace, reconstruction and nation-building.

35. The continued shortage of troops for peacekeeping operations could undermine peacekeeping efforts; he urged countries which were in a position to do so to provide the required troops. Troops should be drawn from both the developed and the developing countries. Rapid deployment would be assisted by the participation of countries with the requisite capacity. Sri Lanka had made a modest contribution as a troop-contributing country; he welcomed the efforts to provide standardized training in national and regional centres, which would enhance the capacity of countries like Sri Lanka to contribute troops. He also welcomed the work done by the Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, in difficult circumstances, urged remedial action for problems identified and looked forward to publication of the handbook on United Nations multidimensional peacekeeping operations.

36. The adverse effects on third countries, in particular developing countries, of sanctions and enforcement actions, must be addressed and compensatory measures should be considered when framing peacekeeping mandates. The increase in the number of operations and their growing human and material costs had resulted in severe constraints on the resources of the Organization; Member States must pay their assessed contributions on time in order to ensure adequate funding of peacekeeping.

Draft resolution A/C.4/57/L.8: International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers

37. **Mr. Kulyk** (Ukraine), introducing the draft resolution, said that the delegations of Belarus, Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Poland, Romania, Sweden and Tunisia had become sponsors; he hoped the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

38. **The Chairman** announced that the delegations of Australia, Benin, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Ethiopia, Fiji, France, Ghana, Haiti, Indonesia, Israel, Malaysia, Mali, Monaco, Mongolia, Mozambique, Netherlands, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Slovenia had also joined the list of sponsors. He had been informed that the draft resolution contained no programme budget implications.

39. *Draft resolution A/C.4/57/L.8 was adopted.*

40. **Mr. Guéhenno** (Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations), recalling the contributions made by peacekeepers, including the many who had lost their lives in the service of the Organization, welcomed the adoption of the draft resolution to create an International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers as well as the decision to award the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal to those who had lost their lives. Peacekeeping operations were the most concrete expression of international solidarity on the part of Member States and that solidarity was the key to guaranteeing the legitimacy and strength of such operations. That solidarity had also been reflected in the Committee's discussions. He would take into account the comments and concerns expressed by members of the Committee in the ongoing reform of peacekeeping operations. Progress had been made but much remained to be done in what would be a constantly evolving process as new challenges arose to be dealt with.

41. **Mr. Mekel** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was regrettable that the representatives of Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic had taken advantage of a debate on peacekeeping operations to indulge in unsubstantiated attacks against Israel. The situation in the Middle East and in southern Lebanon proved that peacekeeping operations could succeed only if Governments lived up to their commitments. He recalled that Israel had withdrawn from southern Lebanon in May 2000, in compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978). With regard to the Shebaa Farms, he noted that the position of the United Nations was that the Shebaa Farms were not on the Lebanese side of the Blue Line. The Government of Lebanon must fulfil its obligations, move its armed forces up to the Blue Line and prevent Hezbollah terrorist activities across the Blue Line which were an ongoing threat to international peace and security. It was, of course, hampered in its freedom of action by the presence of 30,000 Syrian troops; the Syrian Arab Republic, which was the major power broker in the area should likewise respect relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1373 (2001) on international terrorism. If the Governments of Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic were truly interested in international peace and security they should avoid making baseless allegations and comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

42. **Mr. Assaf** (Lebanon), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said he first wished to express appreciation for the efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in particular for the United

Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), countries which had contributed troops to that operation and the 244 peacekeepers who had lost their lives during that mission. He was, however, astonished that the representative of Israel had taken the floor in exercise of the right of reply to refer to alleged statements made by him during the Committee's discussions. He was sure that the official records of the Committee would confirm that he had said nothing to justify such a right of reply.

43. To respond to the Israeli delegation's wild accusations, he wished to point out that it was as a result of Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon that peacekeepers had been sent to Lebanon, and as a result of the long Lebanese resistance that Israel had in 2000 been forced to withdraw, after a 22-year occupation; Israel's vaunted compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978) did not obviate the fact that it was still flouting resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); and that since 2000, there had been 17 repeated air, land and sea violations by Israel of Lebanese territory, in which United Nations facilities had been damaged and hundreds of Lebanese had died.

44. **Mr. Fallouh** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, underscored his country's recognized role in the formulation and adoption of Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 1373 (2001) on anti-terrorism measures, as against Israel's flouting of 29 Security Council resolutions calling for its withdrawal from occupied Territories, and its violation of innumerable others calling for an end to Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory. Before Israel, foreign occupation had been unknown in the Middle East. It was a State founded on terrorism and its history had been marked by bloody massacres, which were still continuing even as dozens of Palestinians were killed daily.

45. The Syrian Arab Republic's presence in Lebanon had begun in response to an official request from the Lebanese Government for it to intervene to safeguard Lebanon's interests and to guarantee its territorial independence. That intervention had made it possible to end the Lebanese civil war. Despite Israel's claim, there was not a single Government in the world that did not recognize the current Government of Lebanon. What Israel was really objecting to were the close ties of blood and good neighbourliness among Arab countries. As the former occupying power in southern Lebanon for 22 years, Israel was not entitled to interfere in Lebanese internal affairs.

46. **Mr. Mekel** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he took the Lebanese representative's reference to the Israeli presence in Lebanon for 22 years as an acknowledgement that Israel had, indeed, left the country two years earlier, in 2000, despite his attempts to obscure that fact. Lebanon itself was acting in shocking disregard of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001): by giving support to the Hezbollah terrorist movement, the main cause of continuing instability in southern Lebanon and a prolific source of attacks in several countries; by funding a Lebanese-Palestinian terrorist group, whose leader was in hiding in a southern Lebanese camp; and most disquietingly, on the evidence of growing reports, by providing a safe haven for al-Qua`idah operatives led by the terrorist responsible for the 1999 plots against United States and Israeli targets in Jordan, having earlier allowed al-Qua`idah to establish a broad infrastructure near Sidon.

47. As for the Syrian Government, it was one of the most active State sponsors of terrorism, even against its own people. The Syrian Arab Republic was a brutal dictatorship and a police state, and had continued to support terrorism since 11 September 2001, even as it sat on the Security Council.

48. It was time for the puppet regime in Beirut and for the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to stop their baseless accusations and fulfil their own obligations under international law and Security Council resolutions.

49. **Mr. Assaf** (Lebanon), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that agreements between the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon concerned only them and not Israel. Although he himself had not made the statements that Israel was attributing to him, it was impossible not to criticize a country recognized as an aggressor by the Security Council and by all nations. It was unconscionable, then, that the Israeli representative should be the one calling for respect for Security Council resolutions. Israel was understandably upset because it had been defeated by a small, heroic resistance movement seeking to liberate its territory. As for terrorists in his country, he acknowledged that some wanted terrorists were known to be in hiding in a Palestinian deportee camp in southern Lebanon but, given the nature of the camp, his Government had no

access to them and had not been able to bring them to justice.

50. **Mr. Fallouh** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Syrian Arab Republic was in Lebanon because of agreements between the two Governments, whereas Israel had had no right to interfere in the domestic affairs of Lebanon and destroy its citizens and its cities; but for the resistance of the Lebanese people, it would not have ended its occupation. Israel still had to release dozens of Lebanese prisoners in Israel, and it must put an end to its occupation of all Arab territories, or there would be no peace in the Middle East. Israel was the only State exercising State terrorism and murdering thousands. It claimed to be a democracy, but democracy must apply in relations between States as well.

51. **Mr. Bozay** (Turkey), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, regretted the distorted views expressed by the representative of Cyprus and recalled that United Nations peacekeeping operations had been undertaken in Cyprus in 1964 to protect the Turkish Cypriot population from Greek Cypriot aggression. He would not take up more of the Committee's time but said the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus would respond in due course.

52. **Mr. Menelaou** (Cyprus), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, observed that in the conditions of armed insurgency in his country in 1963, excesses could well have been committed on both sides. The Turkish delegation's version of why UNFICYP had been established, however, was belied by the Secretary-General's characterization a year later of the Turkish leadership as committed to the physical and geographical separation of the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities as a political goal, with the resulting self-segregation by Turkish Cypriots.

53. The so-called "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" — in reality a Turkish subordinate local administration in occupied Cyprus recognized only by Turkey — had been described by the Security Council in both resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984) as legally invalid, and the Turkish representation there had been called upon to withdraw from Cyprus. Hence, Turkey's practice of circulating as United Nations documents letters from that spurious entity — and its just announced intention to do so in the Committee itself — was an abuse of its prerogatives as a Member State. Turkey would do well to withdraw its occupying forces and allow the Turkish and Greek Cypriots alike to live in peace.

54. **The Chairman** said that the Committee would suspend its consideration of agenda item 78 until it took up, early in the new year, the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.

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A/C.4/57/SR.16

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Chairman: Mr. Maitland .... (South Africa)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 79: Questions relating to information (A/57/21 and A/57/157)

1. **Mr. Tharoor** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information (A/57/157) and drew attention to a number of the activities and achievements of the Department of Public Information since the report had been issued. The United Nations web site, whose popularity continued to grow worldwide, had been accessed 1.1 billion times in 2001 and would receive an estimated 1.6 billion hits in 2002, bringing the average number of daily visitors to 6.5 million from more than 172 countries. The United Nations News Centre, one of the most popular sites on the United Nations web site, would soon be available in all six official languages. He had taken steps to strengthen the management and development capacity of the web site by creating a new and separate Internet Service to complement the Department's Press Service and Radio and Television Service.

2. The Department of Public Information had worked to raise global awareness of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the largest and most complex conference ever held by the United Nations; it had kept the media informed of the ongoing negotiations and coordinated a plethora of media interviews with senior officials. The extraordinary coverage given to the Summit — it had been featured on the covers and front pages of some of the world's leading publications — had been complemented by an inter-agency marketing campaign coordinated by the Department of Public Information to coincide with the Summit.

3. The Department continued to pay special attention to Africa by, inter alia, publicizing the priorities set by the New Partnership for Africa's Development, disseminating an information kit and other material on the final review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and continuing its regular publication of *Africa Recovery*. In the past year, the *United Nations Chronicle* had further developed as a forum for academic discussion and debate and had successfully resumed publication in all six official languages of the Organization. The *United Nations Chronicle* feature service had been launched in close cooperation with United Nations information centres around the world. The *Yearbook of the United Nations* had made great strides in reducing the time lag between the publication date and the year covered and, despite resource constraints, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library continued to serve Member States and civil society effectively.

4. The debate surrounding the work of the Department was not a new one. As far back as 1948, there had been a rift between countries challenging the level of expenditure for public information activities and those, primarily in the developing world, pressing for an expansion of such activities. In the past 20 years, it had undergone at least seven periodic reviews, most recently in 1987-1988, and welcomed the latest opportunity to carry out a comprehensive review of its management and operations pursuant to General Assembly resolution 56/253. The report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2002/2), set out the Secretary-General's vision of the direction the review should take and gave an account of its first stage. The principal conclusions of the comprehensive review of management and operations were contained in the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change (A/57/387), under section II.C entitled "Enhancing public information". In addition to the Department's own review, the results of a number of other reviews, including those relating to the United Nations system library services, Secretariat publications and the Office of Internal Oversight Services review of the United Nations information centres, would have an impact on the work of the Department.

5. In response to a number of problems set out in the above-mentioned reports — lack of clarity surrounding the Department's mission, fragmentation of its activities, a limited ability to match programme performance with "customer needs" and a confusing structure and insufficient degree of coordination with other Secretariat departments — the Secretary-General had proposed a new form of operation for the Department and the United Nations information centres. He had also requested a thorough evaluation of the Department's main products and services and changes in the provision of library services and the publications programme. Under the new operating procedures, the various Secretariat departments and

offices and other organizations of the United Nations system would be responsible for the content of information while the Department would be responsible for its coordination, presentation and dissemination, in close collaboration with the media, Member States and civil society. That new organizational structure would become effective on 1 November 2002; he had attached an organizational chart to the text of his statement.

6. He was anxious to hear Member States' views on the creation of United Nations regional information hubs in high-cost developed areas in order to free resources for strengthening information activities in the developing world. The first such information hub would be in Western Europe, excluding the information services in Geneva and Vienna, which provided vital services to United Nations offices in those locations. It was hoped that the new regional information hubs would strengthen the capacities of information centres away from New York and give them greater autonomy. Through innovative measures, the information centres would reach more people in the official languages, and in non-official languages as well. He would be consulting both Governments and regional organizations to determine what support they could provide to that end. Perhaps United Nations associations and universities in some countries could play a more active role in the translation and dissemination of information materials; his Department would be grateful for any assistance they could provide. Africa, Asia and Latin America as well as the Middle East would be given priority in rechannelling resources and efforts, which would be effected in a flexible manner. With the approval of the General Assembly, more specific proposals by the Secretary-General in that regard could be considered by the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session.

7. **Mr. Haggag** (Egypt), speaking as Rapporteur of the Committee on Information, introduced the report of the Committee on its twenty-fourth session (A/57/21). The report reflected the rich and substantive nature of the Committee's discussions, which had focused on six reports submitted by the Secretary-General and introduced by the appropriate programme managers of the Department of Public Information, namely, reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2002/2), United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations (A/AC.198/2002/3), integration of United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme: continued implementation of the views of host Governments (A/AC.198/2002/4), substantive questions: role of the Department of Public Information in United Nations peacekeeping (A/AC.198/2002/5), continued development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site in the six official languages (A/AC.198/2002/6) and activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee in 2001 (A/AC.198/2002/7).

8. In the course of the Committee's general debate, many delegations had focused on the report of the Secretary-General on reorientation of United Nations in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2002/2), noting that it contained some general preliminary findings on the Department's activities and effectiveness, to be followed by the submission of the results of the comprehensive review of its management and operations mandated in General Assembly resolution 56/253. Pending submission of those results, some of the findings and recommendations of the review were included in the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change, under the section "Enhancing public information" (A/57/387).

9. He drew attention to draft resolution B entitled "United Nations public information policies and activities", which had been the object of diverging views during the discussion. Some Committee members had felt that the resolution should be purely procedural in order to allow for a fuller examination of the issues in the comprehensive review. Others had maintained it was the Committee's responsibility to address the issues raised in the Secretary-General's six reports, particularly the reorientation of public information activities, in order to give the Department guidance as it proceeded to conduct its comprehensive review. The draft resolution before the Committee was a blend of all those views; it contained input from the Committee on the general thrust of public information activities and on certain programmes about which it had strong feelings and, at the same time, left the door open for further examination of certain proposals and future possibilities arising from the results of the comprehensive review. Paragraphs 4, 14, 15, 17, 21, 44 and 50, in particular, reflected a number of the information-related recommendations contained in the

report of the Secretary-General on strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change. Lastly, he drew attention to the Committee's draft decision on an increase in its membership from 98 to 99 with the appointment of Saudi Arabia.

10. **Mr. Stagno** (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the member countries of the Rio Group, said that the Committee on Information was doing commendable work in setting United Nations information policy and guiding the Department to keep pace with developments in the communications field. The Rio Group supported all the recommendations made in the Committee's report.

11. Better use must be made of the Department's available resources by suspending costly activities with little impact in favour of activities that reached a broader public, especially in regions that were unfamiliar with the United Nations message. However, the Rio Group was concerned that some of the Secretary-General's proposed departmental reforms did not take account of the positions expressed in the Committee on Information, which remained the policy organ.

12. One concern was that there should be a clear demarcation between the functions of the Secretariat — to provide rationalized and improved services — and those of the Committee — to set policy guidelines for the needed services. Member States, and not just the Secretary-General, had to define the Organization's communications strategies, and any departmental reorganization or monitoring should further those strategies and be led by the Committee.

13. The Rio Group was also concerned that the Secretary-General had not made any proposal for producing more web-site and radio information in languages other than English and French, and had not taken note of the recommendations of the Committee on Information in that regard. Certainly, the growing Spanish-speaking audience for information — as evidenced by the visits to the United Nations web site — needed to be better served as the Department diversified its language programming.

14. Furthermore, dissemination of information via the traditional media should not be neglected. Access to the Internet was unfortunately limited in the Rio Group countries as in all other developing countries, and the Secretary-General ought to specify how the Department would respond to their information needs.

15. The United Nations information centres were a valuable resource, and any budgetary decisions should be made together with the host countries, the priority being to improve their services.

16. **Ms. Pulido-Santana** (Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that issues relating to information had lately featured more prominently on the international political agenda, given the potential of the communications revolution to open vast new opportunities for economic growth and social development. Yet, paradoxically, as the communications and distance divide had narrowed, the digital divide had widened. The developing countries were unable to take full advantage of a knowledge-based economy, given the growing technological gap between rich and poor countries, and their human development had suffered accordingly. It would require a common effort by all nations, and leadership by the United Nations, to bridge the gap. The Organization had already begun to study the role of information and communications technology in development; and the two-stage World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in 2003 and 2005, would offer an opportunity for helping all countries to modernize and enjoy the benefits of proper access to and management of public information.

17. The proposals made in the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/387), together with the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee on Information at its successive sessions, could serve as the basis for reforming and strengthening the Department of Public Information. The Committee on Information was the main subsidiary organ authorized to make recommendations regarding the work of the Department. Member States, moreover, had to participate actively in the discussions and consultations on any restructuring of the Department, which would have to adhere to the priorities, mandates and activities established by the General Assembly. The Department should also maintain and improve its activities in areas of special interest to the developing countries so as to help eliminate the digital divide.

18. The United Nations information centres, so important in disseminating information about the work of the United Nations to the peoples of the world, had to be given a stronger role in the developing countries, whose needs were totally different from those of the developed world. Consequently, the possibility of establishing regional information hubs had to be

considered in terms of the particularities of each region.

19. The Group of 77 and China welcomed the proposals for integrating and modernizing the services of the United Nations library; however, the Secretary-General should consult with all parties concerned in developing the new approaches.

20. The traditional media, especially radio, were the most readily available medium for millions of people around the world, especially in the developing countries, and were the source of much of their knowledge about the United Nations. It was therefore a matter of concern that in the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/157) nothing was said about strengthening the traditional media. The report also made no reference to the issue of multilingualism in providing public information, including information on the United Nations web site, even though that issue had been very fully discussed in the Committee on Information at its last two sessions. All six official languages must be treated equally in the activities of the Department of Public Information, and appropriate language staff should be assigned to all its activities.

21. **Mr. Haggag** (Egypt) said that the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information (A/57/157) brought out the much greater role taken by the United Nations in the past year and the expansion of the role of the Department of Public Information in various areas, such as its web site, its services to the media, its outreach to non-governmental organizations and its services to the public. Good work was also being done by the United Nations information centres in their host countries, and valuable information was being disseminated by the United Nations through its publications, its library and its cartographic section.

22. While adhering as far as possible to the guidelines set out by the Committee on Information, the Department had nonetheless found it difficult to carry out its multiple mandates within the limited financial and human resources allocated to it. Thus, the Department was wisely redefining its primary activities in order to focus on drawing attention to the major aspects of the Organization's work, and was aiming to prioritize its work programme and allocate its resources among its many mandated activities in order to maximize their impact on the targeted audiences.

23. In response to various ideas put forward by the Secretary-General on redirecting the Organization's information activities, the Committee on Information had adopted draft resolution B; any action taken on the new recommendations of the Secretary-General in his latest report (A/57/157) should take into account the positions set out by the Committee in that resolution.

24. Steps to restructure the Department or rearrange its priorities should in no way affect the existing mandates and approved activities. His delegation looked forward to any evaluation that the Department might conduct to ascertain the desired results of its activities or their impact on the targeted audiences, and hoped that such an evaluation would be submitted to Member States through the Committee on Information for decisions on whether to expand, renew or rationalize those activities.

25. Furthermore, restructuring efforts should not divert the Department's attention from working to achieve the priorities set by the Committee on Information. Foremost among them was the achievement of linguistic parity on the United Nations web site in all six official languages; the maintenance of live United Nations radio broadcasting; and the restoration of the financial and human resources of the United Nations information centres where there had been cutbacks.

26. The proposals the Secretary-General had made in his report on the strengthening of the United Nations and an agenda for further change (A/57/387) also needed to be addressed; the African Group of States had taken a common position on the Secretary-General's information-related recommendations.

27. **Mr. Al-Najar** (Yemen) said that the role of the media was to report facts objectively and clearly, without any doctoring. Yet there was no unbiased media at the current time. The fourth estate had caved in under the first estate, becoming controlled rather than independent.

28. His delegation recommended that the United Nations media assume a central position within the priorities of the Organization. United Nations information activities must be viewed as neutral and removed from political pressures, and should counteract the bias of the regular media. Furthermore, the public had the right to be informed about United Nations resolutions, the extent of their implementation, and the States which disregarded such resolutions.

29. The United Nations information activities should help reinforce harmony, cooperation, peace and mutual respect among peoples. In the world after 11 September, dialogue between civilizations and cultures should be encouraged, while clashes of civilizations and hatred between people should be discouraged. It was disgraceful that many attacks had been waged lately against Islam, belittling Prophet Muhammad. Such practices would increase hatred and dissent particularly between the more than one billion Muslims and the European and American people.

30. His delegation stressed the need to address the challenges imposed by the new technologies, and all the obstacles to the emergence of a new world information and communications order that would help improve people's quality of life. Developing countries should be given the opportunity to develop their information capacities, especially through the United Nations information centres, training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries, and cooperation between Governments and the United Nations for using training sessions provided by the latter.

31. The United Nations information centres were of great importance, although the one in Sanaa remained paralysed in the absence of a director. His delegation hoped that the United Nations would look into that matter sooner rather than later. The United Nations needed those centres in order to serve its noble goals which aimed to achieve international peace and security.

32. **Mr. Serdyukov** (Belarus) said that Belarus was firmly committed to pursuing the development of a system-wide communications strategy and culture of communications, as recommended by the Secretary-General and the Committee on Information. Building a new world information and communications order and strengthening communications as a core component of United Nations strategic activities continued to be of critical importance in reforming the Organization. The Department of Public Information should make further comprehensive efforts to reposition its activities in order to help close the technology gap between the North and the South and ensure that the developing countries and countries with economies in transition could make optimal use of the achievements of the digital revolution. Effective implementation of those tasks would be facilitated by a systematic evaluation of the activities of the Department of Public Information, as proposed by the Secretary-General, with a view to developing agreed information and communications strategies. Crucial aspects of that work would include the strengthening of the information centres component, the balanced use of conventional means of communication, the introduction of new information technology and the achievement of true multilingualism in United Nations information and communications activities.

33. His Government continued to work to expand and enrich the bilateral information flows between Belarus and the United Nations. As a tangible result of that policy, Belarusian radio stations had, in the course of the year, joined the live radio project; Belarusian listeners now had the unique opportunity to receive daily information first-hand about the work of the Organization, prepared on an ongoing basis by the United Nations radio's Russian service. He also noted with satisfaction the Department's training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

34. His delegation strongly supported all efforts aimed at enhancing the efficiency of the information infrastructure of the Untied Nations peacekeeping operations. Clearly, there was an objective need to highlight information relating to the safety of United Nations peacekeeping personnel.

35. His delegation wished once again to urge the Department of Public Information and other bodies of the United Nations system to give continued coverage to efforts to overcome the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, the largest man-made disaster in the history of mankind. It was grateful to the Department of Public Information for its practical initiatives thus far and hoped that the United Nations would continue to implement a long-term and comprehensive policy in that regard.

36. **Mr. Kokuu** (Japan) said that in a world flooded with information it was more necessary than ever to ensure effective and efficient dissemination of information about the United Nations and its activities. He therefore looked forward to the comprehensive review of the management and operations of the Department of Public Information and the reviews of United Nations publications and information materials, library services and information centres conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services. The relevant reports should be distributed as early as possible in

order to allow delegations time to consider them carefully.

37. In the ongoing process of reform of the United Nations, resources should be reallocated from low priority and obsolete activities to high-priority activities such as achieving the goals of the Millennium Declaration; the Secretary-General should identify activities to be discontinued, including in the field of information activities. In that context, the recent restructuring of the Department of Public Information must be assessed from the point of view of effectiveness and efficiency and periodic reviews should be undertaken to ensure that its activities remained timely and relevant. Although his Government had no objection to the transfer of the Cartographic Section to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, it believed that the Cartographic Section should continue to provide adequate service to other departments. With regard to the proposed systematic evaluation of the impact and cost-effectiveness of the activities of the Department of Public Information, he noted that the review already under way covered a similar ground; he also asked why the proposed evaluation would take two or three years to complete. Finally, he expressed the hope that the limited resources available for publishing activities would be allocated to those issues which were of the highest priority.

38. **Mr. Requeijo** (Cuba) said that it was regrettable that the great advances in the areas of science, technology, information and communications which had contributed so greatly to globalization were not equally shared by all the peoples of the world. The growing imbalance between the developed and developing worlds was most obvious in the area of the dissemination of information, hence the increasingly urgent need to establish a new world information and communications order. Unfortunately, the developed world continued to ignore the problem and expect the rest of the world to accept the role of passive consumer of information disseminated for the purposes of political, economic and ideological domination. The developing countries lacked the resources to maintain adequate information services. Access to objective information which took into account the characteristics and traditions of peoples would contribute to strengthening relations between all countries, yet every day the rich and poor countries were bombarded with information without any independent control of the accuracy of that information. That led to the creation of stereotypes and misinformation and was unjust and immoral.

39. United Nations public information activities must provide action-oriented alternatives to that monopoly of information. His delegation welcomed the efforts of the Department of Public Information to develop United Nations web sites and disseminate information to the remotest areas of the world. Funding for radio and television programmes must be maintained and efforts should continue to improve the web site, in all official languages.

40. His delegation once again denounced the daily radio and television attacks directed against Cuba from the territory of the United States, in the form of over 300 hours a day of programming of all types from 17 broadcasting stations on 24 different frequencies. Fifteen of the 17 stations belonged to organizations linked to terrorist elements living and operating in United States territory with the full consent and knowledge of the federal authorities. Eleven stations existed only to transmit destabilizing propaganda against Cuba; one station, Radio y Televisión Martí, belonged to the Government and had a budget of US$ 35 million a year. Such broadcasts violated Cuban sovereignty, international law, and the regulations of the International Frequency Registration Board. In spite of United Nations resolutions against the abuse of information for criminal or terrorist purposes, the Government of the United States continued to finance, facilitate and encourage grossly distorted programming which encouraged illegal emigration and incited violence and contempt for the rule of law in Cuba. He reiterated his delegation's condemnation of that electronic war and stressed that the Cuban people had the sovereign right to choose the type of information they wished to receive and would not be influenced by a foreign power. His Government would continue to defend its sovereignty and independence and would counter those efforts to the best of its ability.

41. **Ms. Baaziz** (Algeria) said that the Department of Public Information should develop a strategy for ensuring that all countries benefited from the new communications technologies that had made it possible to transmit information at unimaginable speed throughout the world. The developing countries must be helped to develop the needed skilled workforce and infrastructure to narrow the information gap between

them and the developed countries and become integrated into the global economy.

42. The United Nations itself had made remarkable progress in taking advantage of the new techniques. Its Internet web site — which received about 5 million visits daily from over 156 countries — was first-rate. The principle of linguistic diversity was well served by its excellent web site pages in several languages, and the news centre was outstanding. In developing the services it offered, the Department should ensure equal treatment for all six official languages, not only on the web site but also in its publications and in the documentation and reference materials available in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library.

43. The United Nations should be a major force for freedom of the press and for cooperation with the developing countries to lessen the control of the developed countries over the dissemination of information. Special attention should be paid to the training of journalists particularly from African countries, which lagged badly in the field of information in general and journalism in particular. The Department should make renewed efforts to publicize United Nations decolonization activities, using the media to support its work to free the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories from the colonial yoke.

44. The United Nations information centres were a very promising way of broadening the access of the developing countries to information, communications and documentation. The centres should be funded regularly and staffed appropriately. The possibility of setting up regional information hubs could be considered in regions where the cost of doing so was high and where the communications infrastructures already existed, on condition that guidelines approved by the Committee on Information and the General Assembly were followed and the countries concerned were involved. In regions where the infrastructures were not in place, the goal of having information reach the people would be compromised.

45. **Mr. Mekel** (Israel) said the revolution in communications technologies had affected virtually every facet of life, in particular the use and dissemination of information. In most societies, increased access to news and information had had, on balance, a positive impact on progress and democracy. The genuine free flow of information and exchange of ideas and opinions could only occur in an open society, however, and it was unfortunate that there were those who sought to control the news media and sources of information available to the public, denying their people their right to participate in the great forward march of humanity. The attacks of 11 September and subsequent attacks had been perpetrated by the disciples of closed societies. Their target was the right of mankind to think, create and debate freely. One of the most blatant examples of that attitude had been the cold-blooded murder of the journalist Daniel Pearl, killed for seeking the truth. His delegation commended the Committee for observing World Press Freedom Day 2002, which had featured a videotaped interview with Mr. Pearl's widow.

46. The Internet had transformed the world in what might one day be regarded as the single greatest development in the field of communications since the invention of the printing press. It could be used to enhance knowledge and understanding and promote democracy but could also be used to promote hatred intolerance, anti-Semitism and other forms of prejudice and racism, the very antithesis of democracy. The international community must remain vigilant and ensure that the wondrous technological innovations of the twenty-first century were used to promote progress, tolerance, knowledge and understanding, and not as a tool to subvert the ideals of humanity as expressed in the Charter of the United Nations.

47. **Mr. Romeiro** (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) welcomed the steps taken by the Department of Public Information to develop coherent communication strategies for the Organization and to concentrate its efforts on effective products and activities. It was important that the information products of the Organization should reach a wide public all over the world. That outreach must be measured in a more systematic and quantifiable manner, however, so as to avoid fragmentation of information activities. Any action taken to evaluate the impact of the Department's activities should generate permanent performance indicators.

48. Radio broadcasting was one of the most efficient means of communication. United Nations broadcasts in Portuguese were of high quality, and their audience was constantly expanding. He inquired as to the status of the new post in that radio section. Traditional means of communication, such as radio, television and publications continued to play an important role; CPLP

agreed that radio in particular remained one of the most effective and far-reaching traditional media, especially in the developing world. It also agreed that all publications should respond to an identifiable need and not duplicate other publications and that they should be produced in a cost-effective manner.

49. The world, in particular the developed world, suffered from information overload; the Department of Public Information must focus on the important messages to be conveyed and the important audiences to be reached. CPLP therefore shared the Secretary-General's concern about the level of resources being spent on United Nations information centres in the developed countries, where access to information was widely available, noted with interest the idea of downsizing those centres and requested information on the level of resources which could be reallocated as a result.

50. Press releases were a valuable tool and should not be discontinued; CPLP remained flexible as to what the structure should be for their production.

51. **Mr. Choo** Jong-youn (Republic of Korea), referring to the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387), said that his delegation supported the initiatives aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department of Public Information. The Department needed to prioritize its activities and evaluate their effectiveness by identifying the targeted audience and clarifying the programme's objectives. Endeavours such as the new e-mail service should be strengthened. At the same time, a review should be made of traditional activities, including publications, which were being marginalized in the electronic age.

52. It would be useful to promote closer cooperation between the Department of Public Information and commercial communications entities with a view to expanding coverage of United Nations activities. A case in point was the cooperation between the Department and the Korean Broadcasting System, which had resulted in the participation of a traditional Korean orchestra in the recent United Nations Day concert. It would be beneficial to explore the possibilities of joint endeavours on special television programmes. With that in mind, the Department should also develop relationships with a wide cross-section of correspondents and journalists from various countries to promote greater interest in issues on the United Nations agenda. His delegation welcomed the strengthening of programmes for media personnel from developing countries.

53. Turning to the issue of the United Nations information centres, he stressed the importance of avoiding duplication and said that his delegation supported the proposal to establish regional information hubs. With regard to peacekeeping operations, he said that his Government planned to strengthen its participation in that field. It was important to enhance the awareness of peoples and mobilize support for those activities. The Department of Public Information should therefore continue to strengthen its capacity for ensuring the effectiveness of the information component in peacekeeping, and develop a coherent information strategy. A historic event, such as the independence of East Timor, was a good example of the importance of publicizing the successful role of the United Nations.

54. His delegation joined others in emphasizing that the United Nations should work on bridging the digital divide. All countries and peoples should be enabled to derive the vast benefits of modern information and communications technologies.

55. **Mr. Singhara Na Ayudhaya** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) said that ASEAN fully supported the Secretary-General's recommendations on enhancing public information contained in his report in document A/57/387. Given the importance of the work of the Department of Public Information in raising public awareness of United Nations activities, ASEAN urged the Department to make optimal use of available communications technologies to ensure the widest possible outreach. With respect to developing countries, the Department should continue its activities in such priority areas as poverty eradication, health and education. ASEAN supported the Secretary-General's proposals to restructure the Department, especially with regard to the establishment of the Division of Strategic Communications. It also welcomed the Department's plan to conduct a systematic evaluation of all its activities. ASEAN stressed the importance of the United Nations information centres; their responsibilities should include the dissemination of information in languages other than the official languages of the United Nations. ASEAN also

welcomed the possibility of establishing regional information hubs, which should benefit all developing countries, and should take into account the different circumstances in each region.

56. Given the importance of bridging the digital divide, ASEAN reiterated its full support for the establishment of the United Nations Information Technology Service, the Health InterNetwork and the Information and Communications Technology Task Force. At the same time, the Department of Public Information should continue to make full use of traditional media such as radio, television and news publications, which reached the larger population of the developing world. ASEAN fully supported the integration of the United Nations libraries and especially welcomed plans to have the Dag Hammarskjöld Library assume responsibility for setting policy and coordinating the work of all United Nations libraries. It also supported the plans to improve electronic access to United Nations collections and facilitate the transfer of paper collections to electronic files, as well as all efforts to make full use of the Internet. The Department should continue to assist the Permanent Missions in improving their web sites.

57. There was a need for closer coordination between the Department of Public Information and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Objective and impartial coverage would immensely contribute to greater public understanding of the work of the United Nations, which in turn would help promote participation of the local population and enhance the safety and security of United Nations personnel. ASEAN also attached great importance to the central role of the Department of Public Information in the selection of spokespersons for United Nations missions. With regard to the proposal of the Secretary-General to transfer the Cartographic Section to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, ASEAN stressed the importance of taking into account matters relating to the primary task of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and avoiding a possible institutional burden for that Department, especially after implementation of the Brahimi reforms.

58. **Mrs. Mulamula** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that her delegation fully subscribed to recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Information (A/57/21). Her delegation was gratified that in June 2002, the General Assembly had devoted a two-day meeting to the consideration of information and communications technology for development; unfortunately, the deliberations of that important meeting had not filtered through to the work of the Committee, since the initiative had emanated from other bodies of the General Assembly. It was important to consider practical measures for bridging the digital divide, bearing in mind that the transfer of technology was not merely a matter of making equipment available but involved access to knowledge and information as keys to development. The Department of Public Information could help developing countries improve their technological capacity in the field of information, particularly through the United Nations information centres and various training programmes, including the training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries. Her delegation commended the Department for further improving the United Nations web site.

59. Her delegation supported in principle the broad proposals for improving the efficiency of the Department of Public Information, which should provide operational support for other departments, rather than duplicating their work. The Secretary-General's review of the Department's management and operations should aim at strengthening the role of the Department and should focus on its mandated functions, ensuring active collaboration with other United Nations departments, as well as offices in the field. Her delegation was encouraged by the continued efforts of the Secretary-General to address the imbalances in the resources available to the United Nations information centres in developing and developed countries. The proposal to create regional information hubs should be studied carefully, and practical criteria should be established with regard to the location of information centres. The support and consent of the countries concerned was of paramount importance.

60. Her delegation commended the impressive role played by the United Nations Information Centre in Dar-es-Salaam despite financial and staffing constraints, and welcomed the launching of the Centre's web site under the direction of a Tanzanian national. It hoped that the Department of Public Information would soon fill the professional post earmarked to strengthen the Centre, and that the appointment process would be transparent and would

give priority to qualified Tanzanian nationals, taking into consideration knowledge of the national language, Kiswahili, and culture.

61. While the extended use of new information technologies by the Department of Public Information was commendable, it was still essential to maintain traditional means of disseminating information, such as print and radio. The maintenance and strengthening of radio services was crucial to the developing world, especially Africa, as a cost-effective medium for reaching millions of people. Her delegation strongly supported the continuation of the live radio project, which should be put on a sound financial footing; it supported the Department's commitment to include funding proposals in the programme budget for 2004-2005 for the continuation of that project. The Kiswahili language programme reached an audience of more than 70 million people across the African continent and was one of the outstanding successes of the Department; however, additional human and material resources were needed.

62. **Mr. Ononye** (Nigeria) said that his delegation supported the modernization of the Department of Public Information; however, extreme care must be taken not to disrupt the Department's outreach programme. Nigeria endorsed the Department's efforts to prioritize its work programme by focusing on such vital issues as poverty eradication, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, HIV/AIDS and international terrorism; that strategy benefited developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. One of the most important programmes was the live radio project, which enjoyed an audience of 50 million in Nigeria alone. He hoped that adequate funding would be available so that it could continue. His delegation commended the Department for developing and maintaining the United Nations web site. The daily press briefing, the United Nations television service and the training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries should also continue. He also commended the Department for the expansion of its cartographic and geographic products and services, particularly the cartographic presentations in support of Security Council briefings and the revised peacekeeping and gender maps.

63. The United Nations information centres served as the local voice of the Organization throughout the world. However, Nigeria believed that the proposal to establish regional information hubs would be feasible only in regions with high rent and maintenance costs. Plans to establish the hubs should be flexible and should be implemented on a case-by-case basis, with the consent of the countries concerned.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 30 October 2002, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Maitland .... (South Africa)

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Agenda item 79: Questions relating to information (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 79: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/57/21, A/57/157)

1. **Mr. Fallouh** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the United Nations in general and the Department of Public Information in particular were responsible for promoting the Organization's voice internationally and clarifying its objectives and activities. The positions of Member States with regard to major international issues should be published. Focusing on issues reflected in United Nations resolutions should also become an essential part of United Nations information efforts, particularly with regard to resistance to foreign occupation.

2. His delegation welcomed the efforts of the United Nations to strengthen its web site, and stressed the need to achieve complete parity between the six official languages and the equitable allocation of financial and human resources among them, in addition to the issuance of publications in all those languages. It affirmed the need to consult the Committee on Information before restructuring the Department of Public Information or reorganizing its priorities, and stressed that such measures should not modify the mandates and activities approved by the General Assembly.

3. His delegation was concerned about the intention of the Department of Public Information to increase its partnership with non-governmental media organizations in order to disseminate United Nations information, since some such organizations could be biased. His delegation affirmed the necessity to comply with General Assembly resolution 13 (I) of February 1946. It also affirmed the necessity of preserving the independence of the resources and administration of the special information programme on the question of Palestine. Furthermore, any name change for that programme should receive the approval of the General Assembly.

4. **Mr. Trepelkov** (Russian Federation) welcomed the increasingly substantive and constructive consideration of information issues by the General Assembly and the Organization's efforts to strengthen its public information and communication activities, which were an important means of shaping national and international public opinion. The Department of Public Information should continue its efforts to enhance the coordination and effectiveness of communications within the United Nations system.

5. On the whole his delegation supported the Secretary-General's recommendations for the strengthening of United Nations public information activities. It welcomed the increasing acknowledgement by all United Nations departments of the role of public information in implementing substantive programmes. The new operational pattern for the Department's activities proposed in the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/157) would enhance the impact of the Department's work, which should focus on dissemination of essential information, within the framework of the agreed strategy. Its priorities should reflect the priorities of the Charter and the Millennium Declaration: the maintenance of international peace and security, conflict prevention, combating international terrorism, and peacekeeping. He noted the rapid response of the Department to the tragic events of 11 September 2001, with the creation of a page in all six languages on the United Nations web site to provide information on the Organization's efforts to address the global problem of combating international terrorism. His delegation had submitted a draft resolution on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security (A/C.1/57/L.1), which had already been approved by the First Committee; that document represented an important step towards legal regulation in the field of information and the creation of conditions for secure information exchange on an equal footing.

6. His delegation noted with interest the Department's efforts to develop the network of United Nations information centres and, while approving the initiative to establish regional information hubs, said that implementation of that plan should be gradual and take into account the opinions of the countries concerned and the needs of the regions involved, including the official languages used in those regions. The United Nations integrated office in Moscow provided information on the work of the United Nations system and coordinated the information efforts of other United Nations offices in the Russian Federation and was the most authoritative and accessible source of United Nations documents and publications in the Russian language. It also translated United Nations publications for dissemination to the public in both the Russian Federation and the

Commonwealth of Independent States. Those efforts should be taken into account when allocating resources to information centres.

7. The proposals to rationalize and improve the United Nations library system required careful consideration, in particular the proposals to transfer some of the functions of the United Nations libraries in Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi to the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, of which there seemed to be insufficient justification. His delegation welcomed measures to prevent the fragmentation and duplication of publications and to place most documents on line and commended the Secretary-General's willingness to ensure that countries with limited access to the Internet were not adversely affected by the transformation to a digital information infrastructure; the capacity to produce hard copy documents should be maintained, as required.

8. Member States should be provided with services of identical quality and scope in all the working and official languages of the Organization; the time-tested principle of linguistic parity must be maintained. The international radio broadcasting pilot project in the six official languages should be continued and a permanent multilingual radio service should be established. He noted that the Russian language radio service was reaching an ever-growing audience and was broadcast not only in the Russian Federation but also in Belarus, Estonia, Uzbekistan and Finland. The six official languages must also receive equal treatment with regard to United Nations web sites; the Cyberschoolbus web site project was of particular interest.

9. **Mr. Kok Poh Fatt** (Singapore) recalled the importance of promoting awareness of the work of the Organization. Unfortunately, even in the host country, the United Nations was associated with negative and often false stereotypes, and was seen, albeit to a decreasing degree, as a bloated bureaucracy where diplomats engaged in negotiations that resulted in incomprehensible documents with little importance for people's day-to-day lives. Elsewhere in the world, even where people had a generally positive impression of the Organization, their knowledge of its real role was likely to be hazy at best.

10. For far too long, the Department of Public Information had suffered from a lack of direction due to the many mandates that Member States had thrust upon it; even after several reviews and a major restructuring exercise, it had difficulty in differentiating and prioritizing its messages and identifying its target audiences. The growing interdependency created by globalization had made the United Nations an indispensable institution for dialogue and for forging global consensus and action; it was essential that the Department of Public Information raise awareness of the Organization's good work in the areas of peace and security, peacekeeping, poverty eradication, development and many others. It must explain to the world the rationale and real purpose behind the Organization's various endeavours. Advances in information and communication technology must be used to achieve the widest possible outreach but radio, television and printed material should not be neglected, especially in view of the relatively low technology capacities of the developing world.

11. Significant strides had been made; for example, the United Nations web site, had clearly grown in importance, and was being enhanced continually in all the official languages. The Department's efforts to transmit daily news on the United Nations directly to journalists through the United Nations News Service were greatly appreciated; it was encouraging that the news service would soon be available in all the official languages. He also welcomed the introduction of live-broadcast radio programmes, which reached tens of millions of persons worldwide and were aired daily by many of the world's major broadcasters.

12. His delegation supported the plan to create a division of strategic communications within the Department of Public Information. The United Nations information centres played a vital role in raising awareness of the Organization and must be made more effective. He therefore supported the proposal to consolidate the information centres in regional hubs; that reorganization should, however, take due account of the circumstances and needs of the various countries and regions.

13. **Mr. Kennedy** (United States of America) said that his delegation looked forward to the comprehensive review of the management and operations of the Department of Public Information but questioned the need for an additional three-year systematic evaluation of the Department's activities, in particular given the numerous recent reviews and reports on the Department's operations. The Department was already in a position to begin

implementation of meaningful and far-reaching reforms. His delegation looked forward to the report called for in draft resolution B (A/57/21, p. 12) on the feasibility of providing free, public access to the official document system and to the decision to be taken in that regard by the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. Programme managers must identify activities to be eliminated in order to shift resources to high-priority areas such as promoting the use of the six official languages on the United Nations web site, and improving the web site. While he recognized the qualities of the *United Nations Chronicle*, its cost was not justified in relation to its readership and impact; it should be eliminated in order to reallocate funding to web site enhancement.

14. He recalled that at the end of the main part of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, in December 2001, the Fifth Committee had decided to establish two new posts in the Department of Public Information. That decision had not been recommended by the Department or discussed in the Committee on Information, nor had it been considered by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions or the Committee for Programme and Coordination. That circumvention of normal procedure was particularly troubling in light of the reorientation of the Department currently under way.

15. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's efforts to rationalize the current ad hoc arrangement of United Nations information centres and offices around regional hubs and said the United Nations Houses and other system offices should also be included when establishing regional hubs. Presentation of a system-wide plan to restructure the information centres would allow for concessions to be made by countries in all regions, with the end result being a more efficient and effective information system which would better meet the needs of Member States. He noted in that context the excellent work of the Photo Unit in ensuring timely distribution of digital images of United Nations meetings.

16. It was regrettable that at the previous meeting the representative of Cuba had chosen to politicize the Committee's discussions. He stressed that his Government had always respected its international obligations, including International Telecommunication Union rules on avoidance of harmful interference with the services of other countries. For more than 40 years the Cuban people had been deprived of their right to freedom of opinion and information; the Cuban Government's alarm at initiatives such as the Proyecto Varela and Radio and Television Martí stemmed from its fear of the consequences of allowing its people to have free access to information about their own country and the world, a freedom to which all mankind was entitled.

17. **Mr. Linn Myaing** (Myanmar) said that as the twenty-first century began, the reduction of existing disparities in information flow at all levels remained one of the main challenges. In the view of Myanmar, that could be achieved by increasing assistance for the development of the communication infrastructure and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for the priorities of individual countries. Myanmar welcomed the decision to convene the World Summit on the Information Society; it also applauded the establishment of the Information Technology Service, the Health Inter-Network and the Information and Communications Technology Task Force.

18. As a country in transition, Myanmar was seeking to make use of the potential of information and communication technologies for economic and social development, while bearing in mind the inherent risks. In order to maintain national identity, unity and culture, public policies would need to be established that could counter the dangers posed by modern information technologies. His Government had established the Myanmar Computer Technology Development Council to formulate a national strategy for dealing with those important issues; it was also enacting a cyber law.

19. Myanmar recognized that education and the ability to use information and communication technologies were essential for the development of the country. E-education had been integrated into the educational system, and efforts had been made to transmit that technology to all Myanmar citizens. Television relay stations and other telecommunications aids had been set up to bring the border areas up to par with the rest of the country. Recent advances included the development of an information and communication technologies master plan, the opening of multimedia classrooms and e-learning centres at universities, colleges and high schools, the establishment of health information networks, the increased use of computer links by governmental and commercial bodies and the establishment of companies to augment e-mail capacity and provide wider Internet access.

20. At the regional level, Myanmar was cooperating with other ASEAN member States, and taking a leading role in efforts to ensure harmonious development in the area of information and communication technology within the context of the e-ASEAN Framework Agreement and the e-ASEAN task force and working groups. Two Malaysian organizations had conducted a cyber law workshop in August 2002, and arrangements were being made to hold a Korean-Myanmar e-Government conference.

21. **Mr. Al Rashedi** (United Arab Emirates) said that his Government attached great importance to the mass media, believing in freedom of speech within the framework of Islamic precepts. It had established eight satellite television stations that broadcast in several languages, and had provided modern communication tools to governmental agencies and schools, making the country among the top 20 Internet-users in the world. Dubai had become an important media and Internet centre. Furthermore, information technology exhibitions and conferences were held annually in the United Arab Emirates.

22. In order to ensure success in its information mission, the United Nations needed to fulfil the following conditions. When preparing the programme budget, priority consideration must be given to the political role of information activities and adequate resources must be made available to strengthen the Department of Public Information. Greater efforts must be made to ensure language parity among the six official languages on the web site and in publications; in that context, it was important to provide the necessary human and technical resources for the Arabic language. Information organizations should provide information and communication technologies to developing countries, in order to promote universal access to information and help develop human resources in those fields. An international code of ethics for information should be enacted, which would include free flow of information, objectivity and transparency, and respect for the religious beliefs and cultural heritage of peoples.

23. Recognizing the critical role of the media in promoting development, his delegation stressed the need to strengthen the activities of the Department of Public Information to publicize the Palestinian cause and the situation in the Middle East; those activities were vital in helping focus the world's attention on the suffering of the Palestinian people and their legitimate right to an independent State, with Al-Quds as its capital, and exposing Israel's violations of international law and human rights and its crimes against innocent civilians. His delegation found it regrettable that the Department of Public Information had slackened its efforts on the Palestinian question; it also deplored the delay in the arrival of Palestinian journalists to the United Nations to take part in the annual training programme, as that programme was very helpful to the Palestinian people, who had no access to the media and information technology in the occupied territories, given the repressive policies of the Israeli military forces.

24. **Ms. Miller** (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the member Sates of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that information continued to be an indispensable tool for the economic and social development of States. The availability of current information technology remained, however, an indicator of the continuing discrepancies between the developed and the developing world. CARICOM supported the need to restructure the Department of Public Information, so that it could better fulfil its mandate as the main information and communication channel for the Organization. That exercise should be carried out in accordance with the principles of transparency and open consultations. The proposed establishment of a division of strategic communications should streamline the Department's work, along with the involvement of various substantive departments. The millennium development goals of the United Nations should, however, continue to remain the basis for the priority themes of the Department is work.

25. Although the holding of exhibitions to portray the United Nations message might be restricted by financial and other resource constraints, CARICOM advocated the use of creative approaches such as travelling exhibitions and the involvement of other agencies, as appropriate. CARICOM also commended the Department of Public Information for promoting international conferences and commemorative activities during 2002, and looked forward to more information about the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the signature of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

26. CARICOM was pleased by the programming provided by the Caribbean Radio Unit in the Caribbean, and welcomed the use of improved

technology and of linkages through the United Nations Information Centre in Trinidad and the United Nations House in Barbados. The overwhelming response from Caribbean radio stations had been gratifying. However, CARICOM requested the reinstatement of the Caribbean Magazine Programme, which provided an informative resource base for a wide cross-section of Caribbean society, and looked forward to the full implementation of General Assembly resolution 38/82 B, which would introduce full radio programming in Creole to Haiti.

27. CARICOM was satisfied by the level of support offered by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library to delegations, in particular through the training programmes, and noted with interest proposals for the central oversight of the United Nations libraries and the development of a virtual library. It looked forward to the early creation of the multilingual electronic gateway, but, while supporting reductions in paper use, emphasized the need to make limited copies of documents available in hard copy. It also reiterated the need to make depository libraries accessible to the public.

28. CARICOM commended the Department of Public Information for its use of available technology to ensure the timely production and dissemination of United Nations publications, as well as savings, and supported the proposal that hard copies of publications should also be provided. It agreed that decisions about what documents to publish should be based on relevance and usage, and looked forward to the resumed operations of the United Nations Publications Board; more information would be welcome about its mandate and composition.

29. CARICOM supported, in principle, the rationalization of the regional information centres through the creation of regional hubs, but urged that the establishment of such hubs should be carried out on a case-by-case basis, sensitive to the unique needs and interests of each region, and after consultations with the relevant countries. It wished to reaffirm the importance of the United Nations information centre in Port of Spain, Trinidad, a vital link between the United Nations and the people it served; as well as the importance of establishing an enhanced information component in the Multi-Island Office of the United Nations Development Programme in Kingston, Jamaica; CARICOM remained open to dialogue, with a view to completing that process.

30. **Ms. Olivera** (Mexico) said that her delegation believed that the mandate of the Department of Public Information should be strengthened to include tasks that transcended the dissemination of information and involved garnering the support of the international community for the achievement of the objectives of the United Nations. Among the basic elements that should be incorporated were the Department's function as a link between the Organization and diverse sectors of civil society; its role in the search for strategic associations; the holding of joint events, and the promotion of education and training programmes on the structure, work, priorities and objectives of the United Nations. It was only with a clearly defined mission and objectives that a broad, coherent review of the work of the Department of Public Information could be carried out. Priorities should be identified on that basis, and not on the basis of cost. Her delegation stressed, however, that the main responsibility for that important process must be shared by the Committee on Information and the Department of Public Information, and that the communications and information flow between them must be constant and transparent.

31. Mexico welcomed the work carried out by the Department in identifying and reforming such key areas as publications, libraries and information centres. However, it felt that the Committee on Information should evaluate information policies and activities so that the General Assembly could adopt appropriate decisions. Her delegation believed, for instance, that the role of the information centres should be improved by way of measures to improve the quality of materials and to enhance links to the civil society. Mexico agreed that resources should be repositioned so as to support information centres in the developing countries and, where possible, the establishment of regional centres; it nevertheless wished to analyse those proposals in greater detail. Finally, she stressed the importance of greater collaboration between the various entities involved in information activities, so as to better support the work of the United Nations.

32. **Mr. Fadaifard** (Islamic Republic of Iran), endorsed the proposed restructuring of the Department of Public Information to enable it to provide timely information to the public on the United Nations. His delegation believed that the Committee on Information should lead the discussions on the Secretary-General's proposals (A/57/387, sect. II.C), in consultation with Member States, and should define the Department's

priorities. Some of the Department's functions which were inconsistent with its core mission should indeed be transferred to other departments. Activities of special interest to the developing countries should be given weight in any new operating model for the Department and for the United Nations information centres in the field.

33. The activities of the United Nations information centres should be expanded in the developing countries, and they should continue to develop their own web pages in local languages; but in the developed countries, where the public had greater access to a wide range of sources of information, the cost of maintaining the information centres was in fact not justified. There, the proposed United Nations regional information hubs would be a positive initiative; but the advantages were less clear in the case of developing countries because of the importance of direct access to the sources of information, and a more flexible approach would have to be taken.

34. His delegation supported the enhancement of the United Nations web site, which provided information to hundreds of millions of people around the world; at the same time, a balance must be maintained between electronic publishing and traditional means of communication. It welcomed the proposals to improve the management and integration of the library services, with greater electronic access to the collections. Consultation with Member States, host countries and organizations involved would make the process of reform in those areas more successful.

35. **Ms. Ropke** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, and, in addition, Iceland, reiterated the commitment of the European Union to the freedom of expression and information, and recalled that the European Charter of Fundamental Rights provided that freedom of expression was a universal right regardless of frontiers, and that the freedom and pluralism of the media must be respected. Freedom of expression was the first casualty of regimes that failed to respect human rights; independent media was a crucial element of democracy building. Although technology was changing and reshaping ways of consuming information, and therefore challenging the distribution of public information, such media as the radio still reached millions of listeners throughout the world. The traditional tasks of the Department of Public Information therefore remained important. It was necessary to formulate policies to strengthen the Department's effectiveness and efficiency so that it could reach out to disseminators of information, especially the media and non-governmental organizations, using the latest technology.

36. Not all members of the human community were benefiting from the advances in information technology; millions of people, for whom the Internet was a distant dream, still lacked such basic needs as water, education and health care. The Internet could not substitute for poverty eradication programmes; nevertheless, developed and developing nations needed to work together to bridge the gap so that poor countries would not be left behind.

37. The United Nations must try to bring its important message to as many people as possible. The overall objective of the reform effort should be to enhance the effectiveness of United Nations information activities, and to develop new strategies for a changing world. It was essential for the United Nations to make information and communication strategies an integral part of the management of the organization. The European Union fully supported the role of the Department of Public Information; other departments as well must contribute to informing international audiences of the goals and achievements of the United Nations. Open, ready access to ideas and information was essential for democracy at the national and international levels. The web site, which would continue to grow in importance, could not be seen separately from the other activities of the Department. The European Union encouraged the Department to prioritize and apply its resources to ensure that the message of the United Nations was delivered using the right technology, addressing the correct audiences, and using the appropriate mix of communications tools. It was important to be aware that different audiences had different needs, and to differentiate among them.

38. An effort should be made to deliver global messages worldwide to local audiences. The European Union had noted a growing sensitivity within the Department of Public Information and other United Nations departments to the importance of multilingualism, and appreciated efforts to put information on the web site in the six official languages. The United Nations must ensure a

multilingual approach to the availability of public information, within budgetary constraints.

39. Invoking the celebration of World Press Freedom Day on 3 May 2003, she recalled the basic principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was regrettable that in many countries of the world, a free press did not exist and the exchange of information was controlled and limited. The European Union strongly condemned the use of violence to silence journalists or otherwise obstruct their work; it also condemned attempts to control or influence the media with the aim of distorting or suppressing information and opinions, and the use of the media for propaganda purposes such as the incitement to ethnic hatred and violence. Finally, she said that the European Union mourned those journalists who had given their lives in all parts of the world.

40. **Mr. Al-Ziani** (Bahrain) said that freedom of speech was one of the main features of democracy, and helped guarantee human rights. Bahrain's National Labour Charter confirmed that all nationals had the right to express freely their opinions, to be creative, to undertake scientific research and to have a free press within the framework of existing laws.

41. Experience had indicated the important role that information played in development. The stunning advances made in information and communication technologies must not widen the gap between developed and developing countries. The United Nations must assume a central role in narrowing that gap by disseminating those technologies throughout the world, in conformity with the goals of the Millennium Declaration and General Assembly resolution 34/182. In that context, he recalled the recommendations made by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in November 1989. If the international community aspired to establish a new world information and communication order, one of the best ways to reach that objective would be to improve the communications infrastructure in the developing countries and help them develop their human and technical resources. He thanked the Secretary-General for establishing the United Nations Information Technology Service in order to bridge the technological gap between developed and developing countries.

42. The plan to merge the United Nations information centres with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) field offices should be tried out first in order to avoid any negative impact on employment. The opinions of the host countries should be taken into consideration in that regard. The United Nations information centres had become a source of information to the public about the objectives and programmes of the Organization. They attracted researchers and young people. They needed to intensity their activities in order to disseminate more widely the United Nations message and role in the world and publicize economic, social and cultural programmes that would help to raise people's standard of living.

43. **Mr. Jon** Yong Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the rapid development of information and communication technology was affecting political, economic, cultural and other activities and accelerating social and economic development, and as such would be an instrument in the achievement of the Millennium development goals of the United Nations. Yet the disparity between the developed and the developing countries continued to widen. The establishment of an equitable international information and communication order should be a top objective of United Nations public information activities. Certain groups had a monopoly on the means of information, which in many cases were made to serve the political purposes of individual countries and gave a distorted picture of the developing countries. Public information must promote understanding and cooperation among nations based on mutual respect and equality.

44. The developing countries should be enabled to participate actively in public information activities through the transfer of advanced technology, the training of experts and international financial investment to enhance their capabilities in the field. The Department of Public Information had made commendable efforts to build the capabilities of developing countries, and the Department as a whole should be strengthened and such activities expanded. In that regard, it was important to ensure impartiality and objectivity in United Nations public information activities and increase coverage of development issues.

45. **Mr. Kabtani** (Tunisia) said that the World Summit on the Information Society, which was to be hosted by his country in 2005, should help establish real partnerships between developed and developing countries in information and communication fields and bridge the wide technological gap currently existing

between countries, promoting growth. His delegation welcomed the forums that were planned with a view to ensuring the success of that Summit.

46. The United Nations played a crucial role in information and communications, a role that needed reinforcement in order to counter the hegemony of biased media groups. His delegation welcomed the restructuring of the Department of Public Information. That exercise should be carried out in coordination with Member States, taking into account the recommendations adopted at the most recent session of the Committee on Information.

47. **Mr. Elashi** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the tremendous information revolution should have a positive impact on all peoples, provided that truth was disclosed. Technical advances and the flow of information through the mass media should contribute to economic, cultural and social development and should help developing countries combat poverty, preserve the environment and protect human rights. What the world needed nowadays was information that enlightened people and broadened their minds. The world was divided into the rich who possessed knowledge and the poor who were ignorant. Advances in information technology had deepened the gap between developed and developing countries.

48. His delegation was concerned about the domination of the mass media by advanced countries, which were using them to serve their own ends. There was no objective reporting on international issues, especially the third world, which was victim to distortions and negative publicity. The mass media were dangerous if they were used to achieve dishonourable ends. The international community should establish a code of conduct for the media, characterized by justice and fairness, which respected the choices of people and their cultures, furthered their economic and social development, and focused on world issues.

49. Notwithstanding General Assembly resolutions 33/115 C and 34/182, the objective of establishing a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order had not been achieved. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's report (A/57/157) and stressed that the Department of Public Information should not emphasize electronic information at the expense of traditional audio-visual, video and print information. The latter should remain the main channels of communication for issues of concern to developing countries, such as the Palestinian cause.

50. While his delegation welcomed the efforts of the Department of Public Information to promote the United Nations message, it stressed that that message should include the struggle of the developing countries against poverty, disease, malnutrition and illiteracy. It supported the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen the technological infrastructure of the Department and improve the United Nations web site, and stressed the need for parity for all official languages. It called for the publication of Arabic documents and information simultaneously with the other official languages.

51. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) said that three points should be stressed: the strengthening of the Department, the prioritization of issues and resource requirements. With performance and efficiency as the guiding principles, there should be no restriction of the Department's activities, particularly in areas that had proved to be of benefit to the developing countries. If the Organization succeeded in meeting particular needs of its Member States, it was performing well, and that criterion should ultimately drive the reform process. However, if the Department was to deliver efficiently, adequate resources had to be provided. To meet the challenges of the new millennium, the Department's technological infrastructure needed to be enhanced, but in a way which did not widen the existing gap between developed and developing countries and which preserved the interests of developing countries in the course of the restructuring. The Department's main vocation was to convey the message of the United Nations, without sensationalism but in a way that attracted a global audience.

52. The Department had done good work in operating the redesigned United Nations web site, judging by the number of visits to it in the past year. Yet, even as the Department continued to upgrade its technological capacity, traditional means of disseminating information should be maintained, for the United Nations radio and television broadcasts had successfully met the needs of their diverse audience. His delegation supported expanding the existing programmes in different non-official languages, in keeping with the current sentiments in favour of multilingualism.

53. In the area of peace and security, the Department had done significant work. In complex United Nations peacekeeping operations, the information component was vital for a proper understanding of mission objectives and capabilities. The two additional posts recently approved for the Department should further enhance its capacity in that respect.

54. The idea of establishing regional information hubs should be applied flexibly, taking into account the views of Member States and especially of the countries directly concerned. Clarification was needed on the amount of resources that would be released and how they would be utilized in strengthening the United Nations information presence in the developing world.

55. **Mr. Boisson** (Monaco) observed that it was essential to ensure that the fundamental right of the United Nations itself to information and its right to speak out for peace, development and other major issues were not in any way restricted, especially by devious means.

56. The performance of the Department of Public Information in recent months had been outstanding, and equal to the new demands on the international scene. Its coverage of the series of great world conferences and meetings held since April 2002 — on financing for development, on ageing, on children, on sustainable development — had been remarkable, and it had taken a dynamic, creative and humane approach that had spoken also to civil society. It was now even more important that the programmes and plans of action that had been the outcome of those major assemblages should be widely publicized as quickly as possible by the Department, working in close consultation with the operational departments, so that an informed world public could monitor their application internationally and nationally.

57. That task alone would require the reinforcement and consolidation of the Department, in its technological capacity as well. His delegation therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's proposals to that end, using available resources, but remained concerned about the issue of linguistic parity, for which only long-term solutions were proposed. An insufficient outlay of funds, and an organizational reluctance to increase the funding, had hampered the United Nations information and communication capacity that was so necessary in contemporary society. Member States should act to remedy this situation.

58. The Secretary-General's many proposals on questions relating to information were heartening. A greater emphasis on the work of all the operational departments would certainly keep both the general public and persons of authority in government and civil society regularly informed, but in the process the Department should take care to give comparable publicity to all areas of United Nations endeavour and achievement. The proposals for improving publications, library services and information centres stressed, among other things, improved technological availability; but those without access to electronic means should not be forgotten. The regional information hubs under consideration should be adapted to each regional context, and should emphasize the needs of developing countries.

59. The United Nations radio broadcasts continued to reach thousands of people, among them the most deprived and most isolated, and their outreach should be extended both geographically and linguistically. At the same time, the Department could consider providing material to national, regional or local broadcasters that would encourage them to feature the United Nations in programmes of their own.

60. **Mr. Dev Pant** (Nepal) expressed his country's satisfaction at the Department of Public Information's innovative steps towards rationalizing its public information activities, the expanded scope of the publications and electronic broadcasting, the enrichment of the web site and library services and increased interaction with non-governmental organizations. Yet the bitter fact remained that the majority in the world did not have access to United Nations information services; information on the United Nations was most plentiful where it was least needed, and vice versa. Little had been done to narrow the digital divide; his delegation hoped that the World Summit on the Information Society would make a breakthrough in that respect.

61. The Department must ensure wider dissemination of information, both geographically and linguistically; resources might have to be engaged for that purpose. It must play a more effective advocacy role for the implementation of existing initiatives and the launching of new ones. It must be more streamlined and adhere strictly to the General Assembly's mandates regarding public information in formulating plans for improving the United Nations information system, and

must place the interests of the poor and disadvantaged at the core of its initiatives.

62. The United Nations must continue to make the best use of the various modes of communication to disseminate its message far and wide. Radio was still the most accessible means of information in many developing countries with a low literacy rate, where print was not the ideal medium and where television was still a luxury. It was imperative for journalists from developing countries to be given the opportunity to benefit from the Organization's training programmes.

63. **Mr. Jaiswal** (India) said that his country attached great importance to the achievement of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order. In a compressed world, better and speedier availability of electronic information could contribute to economic and social development and help reduce poverty and improve the quality of life, while its unavailability could not but widen the digital divide. The Department of Public Information had an important role to play and its reorientation exercise could help correct the information and communications bias against the developing countries.

64. His delegation was particularly heartened by the enormous strides made in updating and expanding the United Nations web site and making it more user-friendly and by the expansion of the News Centre to include all six official languages. However, accuracy, impartiality and objectivity must be preserved and should not be sacrificed for speed. The *Yearbook of the United Nations* and the *United Nations Chronicle* were, respectively, an unparalleled archive and a stimulating publication on a wide variety of issues. Indeed, an Indian edition of the *Chronicle*, for circulation in Asia, was being brought out at no additional cost to the Organization. He hoped that similar approaches would be explored for other regions.

65. The United Nations Information Centres played a vital role in spreading to the peoples of the world the message of the Organization's relevance to their lives and he supported the Secretary-General's proposal to establish regional information hubs, which should optimize both the contribution and impact of the information centres. Other welcome developments were the modernization of the library services, the upgrading of the responsibilities of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library as the overall policy-maker and coordinator, and the plan to improve electronic access to United Nations collections and facilitate the transfer of paper collections to electronic files.

66. The question to be addressed was the extent to which the restructuring of the Department would meet the developing world's aspirations and succeed in correcting the current bias against it. The focus of any strategy must be developmental issues, which were the basic challenge for developing countries; the Department should do more in terms of highlighting critical development issues, and the Organization's work in addressing them.

67. **Mr. Datsenko** (Ukraine), welcoming the efforts to strengthen the Organization's communications function and the Department of Public Information, commended the efforts to update and improve the web site and make it more visually attractive. His delegation was particularly impressed with the redesigned News Centre, an excellent source of United Nations news and a gateway to a wide array of links to news of the day in an easily accessible and user-friendly format. The recently launched e-mail news service was highly valuable for supplying United Nations news to a variety of audiences, especially journalists and other media outlets, thus helping to bridge the digital divide and reach the public in countries where the Internet was not yet widely available.

68. The United Nations information centres maintained direct contact between the Organization and local communities. The information component of UNDP in Ukraine was effective both in terms of presenting a unified image of the United Nations and in enhancing information activities in major areas of the Organization's work. His delegation fully supported the integration of the information centres with UNDP field offices, which would make for closer coordination, as well as savings through the use of shared resources. Considering the opportunities that information and communication technology provided for many developing countries, adequate resources should be allocated to those centres, greater efforts were needed to narrow the digital divide.

69. His delegation welcomed the Department's efforts to enhance the public information capacity of peacekeeping operations and urged it to strengthen its role in the selection of United Nations peacekeeping spokespersons. It hoped that, during the observance of

the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, the Department would find appropriate ways of focusing the international community's attention on the Organization's peacekeeping efforts. The Department could play a central role in alerting the international community to a variety of issues of global concern, including the problem of Chernobyl. Ukraine supported the Department's efforts to reorient its activities for the benefit of all.

70. Mr. Helg (Switzerland) said that the diversity of means of expression in the United Nations system was an important concern for his country, itself multilingual and an active member of the francophone community. His delegation therefore welcomed the efforts to promote the two working languages and ensure parity among the six official languages in all fields of United Nations activity. Improvement of public information was an important element of the ongoing reform of the Organization.

71. Given the fact that the information centres in developed countries used up 40 per cent of available resources, his delegation endorsed the proposed restructuring of the information centres around regional information hubs, and was reassured to learn that restructuring of information centres and conference services would not detract from the capacities of the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna. The United Nations Office at Geneva could play a central role as the European hub, not only because it already possessed the necessary equipment and know-how, but because of its age-old tradition of multilingualism and the presence of a large number of specialized agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

72. The logic of an integrated, streamlined library system was evident. However, his delegation was concerned that the proposed measures could lead to increased bureaucracy, the creation of new high-level posts, or transfer of the management of the library of the United Nations Office at Geneva to the Department of Public Information in New York. Moreover, it firmly believed that the archives of the League of Nations, which had no historic link with New York, should continue to be managed from Geneva.

73. Information and communication technology was becoming increasingly important given its impressive potential for contributing to human development, and reaching out to isolated and underprivileged communities. However, the myriad initiatives which had been taken to put those technologies at the service of humanity lacked a focal point that would harness their potential synergy, while the digital divide gaped wider. That was the situation that the forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society — which should involve all stakeholders — was called upon to rectify. Concerted action needed to be taken to develop the potential of the new technologies and forge a worldwide consensus and a collective resolve to share the benefits of the technological revolution and use them to attain the goals of the Millennium Declaration. The Summit must transcend structural and technological aspects and tackle institution-building, the contextualization of information, the protection of local content, cultural diversity and multilingualism.

74. Having very recently become a fully-fledged member of the United Nations, Switzerland intended to play an active role in information and communications, and, accordingly, would be seeking membership of the Committee on Information.

75. **Mr. Ouologuem** (Mali) said that the advent of the new information and communication technologies had brought about a radical change in the way people lived, and had created a digital divide between the developed and developing countries. One way in which the Organization could narrow that divide was to establish a new world information and communication order in the service of human development. To that end, Mali had hosted the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on the Information Society. Other regional summits could help bridge the gap and place the new technologies at the service of development and cultural diversity of humanity as a whole.

76. His delegation endorsed the proposals made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Africa Group on the improvement of United Nations public information policies and activities. Member States' participation, through the Committee on Information, in the discussions on the proposals for reform of the Department of Public Information and the regional information centres would help to enhance the Secretary-General's new vision of information. Despite the enormous strides made regarding the web site, unrestricted access to the Treaty Collection and the Official Document System would make for wider dissemination of the legal instruments constantly requested by Member States.

77. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's view that the establishment of regional information hubs must take account of the views of Member States; close collaboration between those hubs and Governments should contribute to the achievement of the primary goal of information in the service of development. However, it was for the Department to ensure that the information on the web sites of regional hubs was reliable. His delegation strongly supported the Department's efforts to strengthen cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

78. No society could function without information. Development would be impossible without sound, clear and equitable information that respected cultural diversity. In that context, the New Partnership for Africa's Development was counting on the Organization's support to disseminate its goals to the peoples of the developing countries.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.

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Chairman: Mr. Maitland.. (South Africa)

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Agenda item 79: Questions relating to information (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 79: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/57/21, A/57/157)

1. **Mr. Arrouchi** (Morocco) expressed his delegation's support for the Secretary-General's proposals to modernize the Department of Public Information, which had a strategic role to play at a time when the multiple challenges of globalization called for multilateral action. Lamenting the proliferating mandates which had resulted in a fragmentation of the Department's activities and ambiguity surrounding its mission (A/57/157, para. 64), he called for greater efficiency and effectiveness by focusing on the main priorities which had already been defined.

2. His delegation had some preliminary views with regard to proposals for the restructuring of the Department of Public Information. First of all, strategic effectiveness — not budgetary constraints — should be the impetus for reviewing United Nations information and communication policies. The review process should take into consideration the special needs of developing countries, particularly in Africa, the continent hardest hit by poverty, armed conflict and HIV/AIDS. His delegation would welcome synergy between the Department and other Secretariat departments and strategic partnerships with the media, non-governmental organizations and educational institutions that could disseminate the Organization's messages stressing the importance of linguistic parity among the six official languages, he welcomed the announcement that the United Nations News Centre would soon be available in all six official languages. With regard to the United Nations information centres, his delegation applauded the Secretary-General's flexible approach to the creation of regional hubs and looked forward to a constructive debate on the matter. Since multilateralism was necessary in order to implement the commitments undertaken by Member States in the Millennium Declaration, divisiveness over public information policies and practices could not be justified.

3. **Mr. Kanaan** (Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)) said that, against the backdrop of Islamophobia in the media after the events of 11 September 2001, which posed unprecedented challenges to the Islamic world, the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Fifth Session of the Islamic Conference of Information Ministers, held in Tehran in November 2001, had stressed the need to update the mechanisms to implement the Information Strategy of Islamic States and amend the Islamic Information Code of Ethics. The OIC Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs, chaired by the President of Senegal, was working to develop and strengthen the Organization's information strategies by promoting cooperation among its member States and by keeping abreast of new information and communication technologies to enable them to meet contemporary challenges.

4. The ongoing cooperation between the United Nations and OIC, particularly between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IESCO), was highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (A/57/405). In its information activities, OIC emphasized priority areas identified by the major United Nations global conferences, including poverty eradication; basic education, particularly for girls; and capacity-building in the area of information and communication technologies. Dialogue among civilizations was a new dimension of cooperation between the United Nations and OIC. A first step in that direction had been taken with the convening of the OIC European Union Joint Forum held in Istanbul in February 2002. At the twenty-ninth Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Khartoum, Sudan, in June 2002, a decision had been taken to establish a permanent open-ended committee on dialogue among civilizations.

5. OIC efforts to narrow the digital divide in the field of information and communications included the Al Azhar online project, providing access to information on the Islamic culture and heritage from one of the oldest universities and religious institutions in the world; an information and communication technologies summit meeting, held in the United Arab Emirates, to discuss the role of Governments in promoting information and communication policies and programmes; and the completion of the 20-year project, undertaken in cooperation with UNESCO, concerning the Library of Alexandria, Egypt. Other initiatives included the establishment of an Islamic satellite channel and the provision of human, material and

technical support to the Islamic States Broadcasting Organization and the International Islamic News Agency. Additionally, IESCO had been mandated to develop a detailed programme to refute the denigration of Islam and Islamic civilization by the Western media. OIC member States had been encouraged to participate actively in the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in Tunisia in 2005, with a view to exploring ways and means of bridging the digital divide between the developed and developing countries.

6. As the Israeli Government continued its bloody and inhumane military campaign against the Palestinian people, their properties and institutions in the occupied Palestinian Territories, committing war crimes, practising State terrorism and sabotaging the peace process, it was incumbent on the United Nations to devote greater attention to the question of Palestine, including in the field of information. In that connection, OIC commended the Department of Public Information on implementing its special programme to enhance public awareness of the question of Palestine, for example, the International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People, held in New York in September 2002. He also praised the Department's training programmes for Palestinian journalists and staff from the Palestinian National Authority.

7. Referring to the summary by the President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly on the meeting of the General Assembly devoted to information and communication technologies for development (A/57/280), he said that OIC agreed that the United Nations was uniquely placed to provide the normative policy framework for addressing the challenges of information and communication technology policies. In his statement to the General Assembly, the President of Senegal had stressed the importance of information and communication technologies, one of the main priorities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and had also highlighted the need to support regional collaborative efforts and initiatives in that regard.

8. **Mr. Tharoor** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) expressed gratitude for Committee members' reaffirmation of the importance of the Department of Public Information and their support for its efforts to prioritize its work. In response to comments made on behalf of the Caribbean Community and by other delegations, he stressed that the Secretary-General and the Department would not be setting new priorities for the Organization; Member States had already done that at the Millennium Summit and recent international conferences, and it was now the Department's task to communicate those priorities effectively. A number of speakers had said that the role of the Committee on Information was critical in any reform of the Department of Public Information. He fully agreed that the broad directives for the Department's work should emanate from intergovernmental bodies; however, within those parameters, it was the Secretariat's responsibility to organize that work effectively. The immediate administrative restructuring of the Department at Headquarters would thus be implemented on 1 November 2002 under the authority of the Secretary-General, since it concerned merely the way in which the Department would be organized to fulfil the challenges identified by Member States that restructuring would in fact facilitate the implementation of the Department's mandate. Since reform was an ongoing process, the Committee on Information would always be a guide and a partner in that undertaking.

9. Noting that many Committee members had emphasized the importance of a strengthened evaluation culture based on programme impact reviews, he said that each of the Department's activities and products would be evaluated regularly. The current restructuring of the Department reflected the results of its own detailed review and evaluation of its work thus far. Replying to the representatives of Japan and the United States of America, he said that, although the Secretary-General had proposed three years as a reasonable time frame for an evaluation, that did not mean that the Department would wait three years to evaluate its work. Evaluation would be an ongoing process; he had already instituted the necessary training programme in the Department to prepare managers to conduct such evaluations as part of their regular work.

10. Many delegations had praised the Department for its use of new communications technologies and stressed the importance of the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in two phases in Geneva and Tunis in 2003 and 2005, respectively. He was currently making arrangements with representatives of the television industry and the Swiss

Government to organize a World Electronic Media Forum as a side event to the first part of the Summit.

11. Pointing out that more people received news of the United Nations through the traditional media of radio and television than from the web site, he said that the United Nations radio had tens of millions of listeners and that the Department had established partnerships with over 160 major broadcasters around the world, including the Voice of Nigeria, the Voice of Egypt, the South African Broadcasting Corporation, Africa Numero Uno, National Radio of Argentina, China National Radio and the Voice of Russia. Scores of other radio stations in Latin America, Africa and the Arab world used the United Nations daily news bulletins via other networks. It was therefore not surprising that many Committee members had called for the pilot radio project in the 2004-2005 biennium to be placed on a sounder financial footing. The United Nations News Centre and the News Service were geared primarily to developing countries' media needs. Of 109 countries which subscribed to the News Service's e-mail version, 84 were developing countries or countries in transition. United Nations television disseminated footage from the meeting room, and formal distribution partnerships were now being established with television networks that carried "United Nations in Action" features and the half-hour interview programme known as "The World Chronicle". Details of those activities appeared on the new media partnership page (www.un.org/av/mediapartnerships.htm). In response to a number of questions, he could assure the Committee that the Department had no intention of discontinuing its press releases service.

12. He thanked the representative of Jamaica for her praise of the live radio project and noted that a number of other radio stations in the Caribbean, including in Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines would begin airing it in early November. He explained that most of the material previously contained in the weekly taped Caribbean magazine was now included in either the daily newscast or the weekly round-up produced on Fridays.

13. The Department remained committed to promoting multilingualism, within the budgetary constraints determined by Member States. The United Nations web site had benefited from the loan of an expert funded by the Government of Spain, whose contract had unfortunately just ended. An agreement had been made with a Spanish university to translate documents for the web site free of charge, with some 1,000 pages having been published to date, and a similar agreement was under negotiation with the University of Cairo. He urged Governments to encourage such arrangements with the United Nations and also recalled the proposals of the Secretary-General in his report (A/57/355) to reinforce the Department's presence on the web site in all the official languages.

14. The Department had never before sought any resources for its web site operations and had relied instead on reallocating existing resources. The web site had been built entirely by redeploying 17 existing posts. Furthermore, the widely acclaimed United Nations News Centre and the e-mail-based News Service, currently in English and French, would soon be available in all the official languages. Those activities had been realized through redeployment of 13 existing posts. Finally, the Department had redeployed a Director-level post and two other posts to create a new Internet service. That service would significantly enhance effectiveness and build greater synergies with other production and information units of the Department and the Secretariat. The Department had now exhausted the potential pool for redeployment. The request for additional resources to narrow the gap in services between all the language sites had been made only after a careful review of whether additional posts could in fact be redeployed.

15. The *United Nations Chronicle* was deliberately pursuing an editorial policy of academic debate and discussion, rather than duplicating the work of reporting on United Nations activities and events. As part of the restructuring exercise, it had been integrated into the new Educational Outreach Section. The option of closing the *Chronicle* had been seriously considered but it did in fact have an audience, in particular in the academic and non-governmental community. The investment in the parent edition remained modest since it was printed internally and writers contributed articles without remuneration. Additional resources had been necessary to produce the magazine in all the official languages, as requested by the General Assembly, but those resources had been kept to a minimum thanks to innovative co-publishing arrangements with identified partners in the respective language areas. The *Chronicle* had also maintained its relevance by means

of a regularly updated online edition, which had recently received a web award of excellence. The *Chronicle* and its staff were therefore an important component of the Department's overall Internet strategy.

16. Turning to the United Nations information centres, he said that the Department took note of Member States' concerns about the proposal to create regional hubs; if that proposal was approved by the General Assembly, the Department would implement it on a case-by-case basis, in close cooperation with the host countries. He also stressed that dissemination of information in local languages, on the Internet and in printed form, was a priority for the information centres, within the limits of available resources. To date, 48 information centres had Internet sites in the six official languages as well as in 26 local languages and printed documents were often available in local languages. The Department, in collaboration with other organizations, was continuing to develop new methods to increase its capacity in that regard. As for the resources which could be freed up by the creation of regional hubs, he said that in Western Europe, the creation of a regional hub to replace the nine existing information centres, not including Vienna and Geneva, would free up approximately $3,900,000 during the current biennium. He had taken note of the special situation of the information centres in Yemen and the United Republic of Tanzania and their staffing needs.

17. Great progress had been made in strengthening the Department of Public Information's collaboration with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. An information specialist with peacekeeping experience would shortly be added to the Department staff. The designation of the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers would also provide a peg for the Department's information efforts. The Department was studying the possibility of increased cooperation with external commercial entities and was developing closer partnerships within the United Nations system, principally, though not exclusively, through the United Nations Communications Group.

18. The Department would continue its successful training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries. He noted that a total of 34 African journalists had participated in two separate programmes at Headquarters during the preceding four years; those efforts would continue. With regard to the special information programme on the question of Palestine, although the annual training programme for Palestinian media practitioners had had to be postponed due to visa difficulties, that matter was being discussed with the host country and it was hoped the programme would take place early in 2003. The Department was also actively planning a 2003 media encounter on peace in the Middle East.

19. On the question of hate speech, including Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, he stressed that the Department was devoting great attention to promoting the Charter principles of coexistence and tolerance and Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and would continue the successful programmes relating to the Dialogue among Civilizations. He joined in condemning any use of violence to silence journalists or indeed any obstruction of their work and mourned those journalists who had lost their lives. The media were essential allies of any organization, and any threat to the freedom of journalists was a threat to the freedom of all.

20. With regard to the proposals to integrate and modernize United Nations library services, the Department would bear in mind the requests for a full review. The Department in association with the Special Committee on Decolonization, would continue to ensure the widest possible dissemination of information on decolonization. Moreover, in cooperation with the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs, the Department was preparing a promotional campaign to publicize the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to be observed by the General Assembly on 9-10 December 2002. The Department would also continue its work to increase awareness of major United Nations conferences.

21. Lastly, he welcomed the desire of the delegation of Switzerland to become the 100th member of the Committee on Information, a sign of that Committee's vitality.

Draft resolution A entitled "Information in the service of humanity"

Draft resolution B entitled "United Nations public information policies and activities"

Draft decision entitled "Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information"

22. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to take action on draft resolutions A and B and the draft decision contained in paragraph 70 of the report of the Committee on Information (A/57/21).

23. **Ms. Wilkinson** (Secretary of the Committee) said that with regard to the programme budget implications of the draft resolutions and draft decisions, she had been informed by the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Finance, that the budgetary implications contained in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening the Department of Public Information, within the existing capacity, in order to support and enhance the United Nations web site in all official languages of the Organization" (A/57/355) prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/253 (paras. 145 and 149) contained sufficient information for the consideration of the Committee. She had also been informed that the Fifth Committee was currently considering that report.

24. *Draft resolutions A and B and the draft decision entitled "Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information" were adopted.*

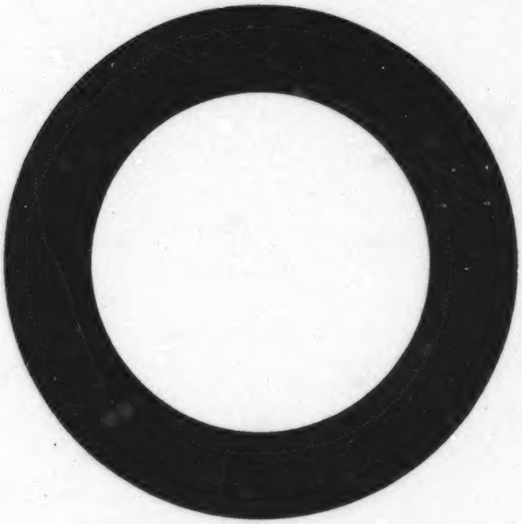
25. **Mr. Blanco** (Venezuela), recalling the recommendations in the area of information made by the Secretary-General in his report on strengthening of the United Nations (A/57/387) and further recalling that the strengthening of the United Nations was an ongoing process, which required the widest possible consultations, suggested that in future the Committee should hold an interactive dialogue with the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information on the issue of continuing reform, particularly in the context of the Secretary-General's report. That dialogue could be organized in the Committee during the next regular session of the General Assembly, within the existing allocation of meetings. States could continue to take part in the general debate on the item relating to information at the plenary session. He noted that a similar mechanism was used during consideration of the agenda item on peacekeeping operations in all their aspects. An interactive dialogue would provide Member States with an opportunity to deal in a more direct and flexible manner with issues relating to reform of the Organization in the area of public information; it would be particularly valuable in the context of the three-year evaluation of the Committee's work.

26. **The Chairman** said that the Secretariat had taken due note of the proposal made.

27. **Mr. Requeijo** (Cuba), speaking in exercise of the right of reply and referring to the statement made by the representative of the United States of America on the previous day, said that his delegation had not attempted to depart from the Committee's agenda; it had in fact been the representative of the United States who had done so with his comments on the Cuban social system. His delegation had not tried to politicize the debate; it had simply denounced, as in the past, the flagrant violations of international broadcasting norms which were committed daily against Cuba in the name of so-called freedom of information. Such broadcasts were illegal and immoral; moreover, the Cuban people were educated and were perfectly capable of seeking out information and ascertaining the truth. The ineffectiveness of the broadcasts was what gave rise to the ire of the United States delegation.

28. The Proyecto Varela supposedly supported by some 11,000 Cubans, was in fact an American-inspired initiative. Moreover, 8.2 million Cubans had freely decided to ratify their Constitution shortly after the small Proyecto Varela group, sponsored by the United States interests section in Havana, had submitted its petition on constitutional reform, which was currently being reviewed by the appropriate constitutional authorities. He also recalled that the Cuban people had learnt of the project when Cuban radio and television had broadcast live the speech made by former United States President Carter at the University of Havana, which had not been carried by Radio Martí. He wondered why an American-sponsored station had censored that statement by a former President of the United States who shortly thereafter had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.



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Summary record of the 19th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 4 November 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Maitland .... (South Africa)

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Agenda item 76 : United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 76 : United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/57/13, A/57/282, A/57/294, A/57338, A/57/455, A/57/456, A/57/462)

1. **Mr. Hansen** (Commissioner-General, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) (UNRWA), introducing the UNRWA report for the period from 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002 (A/57/13), said that the escalation of violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in Israel, which was now in its second year, did not give grounds for any optimism about the future. As Catherine Bertini, the Secretary General's Personal Humanitarian Envoy, emphasized in her report, an alarming humanitarian situation had developed in the region. Poverty levels in the Occupied Palestinian had risen above 60 per cent, and about 50 per cent of the population was unemployed. The Personal Envoy believed that the main reason for the severe decline in economic conditions was the lack of access resulting from a regime of closures and curfews.

2. Since the reoccupation of the main Palestinian population centres in the West Bank, Palestinian traffic had been prohibited from major roads, and secondary roads had been blocked. There were now 73 permanent checkpoints and about 100 temporary checkpoints set up in the West Bank. The regime of curfews had become more intense and widespread. About 688,000 residents of 39 towns, villages, and refugee camps continued to be confined to their homes for long periods almost every day. The Gaza Strip was frequently bisected or trisected with road blocks and checkpoints on the roads connecting its northern, middle, and southern parts. The regime of closures and curfews strangulated all movement, as a result of which humanitarian supplies and vehicles could not reach those in need, and Agency staff could not reach their work places. The Palestinian economy was now in a state of collapse and was totally dependent on external assistance. The most seriously affected were the poorest segments of the population, the largest number of whom were refugees for whom UNRWA had direct responsibility. The costs associated with the introduction by the Israeli authorities of additional security procedures and levies that were applied to UNRWA deliveries, including food and medicines, were becoming a substantial drain on the Agency's already limited financial resources.

3. UNRWA currently faces perhaps one of the most serious challenges in its history. The humanitarian crisis continued to deepen, and the ending of that tragedy undoubtedly lay in finding a just and durable political solution. Since October 2000, the Agency had delivered additional emergency assistance amounting to US$ 150 million to over 210,000 families in the Occupied Palestinian Territory without the need for any significant addition to its staff or infrastructure, and without detriment to its regular refugee programmes in the areas of education, health care, and social services. At the beginning of the year, no one could have predicted such a major intensification in the level of violence, and the emergency appeal for US$ 117 million for 2002 had proven to be inadequate. The Agency had therefore made a supplementary appeal, for an additional US$ 55.7 million. So far, of the US$ 89.4 million pledged, only US$ 48.9 million had been received. The unprecedented humanitarian crisis could become even worse. It could not be expected that there would be significant improvement in that regard in the forthcoming year. UNRWA was therefore preparing to extend the emergency relief programme into 2003.

4. The effectiveness of the Agency in response to the emergency situation depended very much on its ability to carry the additonal burden with its existing infrastructure and trained staff. In order to maintain that ability, the Agency must be assured of an adequately funded regular budget. The Agency's services were a most significant aspect of its ability to contribute to trust and stability in the refugee community. Refugees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were currently living in extremely harsh conditions and were increasingly looking to the Agency to help alleviate their suffering. Unless additional pledges were forthcoming in the remaining two months of the year, the total would not grow, as had been projected, by 5 per cent in 2002, but would decline by 3 per cent. In the circumstances, donors should take urgent measures in order to maintain the minimum necessary rate of growth of past years. Maintaining a 5 per cent growth in contributions would make it possible to keep up with the growing needs. Preserving the quality and extent of the services provided by the Agency with limited resources was a

continuing challenge, since the resources currently available to the Agency amounted to US$ 70 per capita, as against US$ 200 per capita in early 1973. As a result, a number of coping measures had had to be adopted, such as converting schools to two-shift operation. Nevertheless, even under such conditions, the quality of education and other services had been maintained at the former level.

5. In the context of the management reform process, the Agency had made a number of changes in its education programme. Unfortunately, because of resource constraints, information technology and computer facilities were being introduced in schools on a very limited scale. The Agency was striving to supplement the curricula of the host countries with the help of its educational materials promoting tolerance, conflict resolution, and human rights. The UNRWA health programme sought to maintain World Health Organization methodologies and standards. Projects were being undertaken to integrate water and sewerage systems of refugee camps with municipal and regional systems. The refugee registration system, which would form the basis of a future archive consisting of some 16 million documents, was being computerized. On the basis of experience gained in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the microfinance and microenterprise programme was being extended.

6. The additional costs incurred by the Agency as a result of security restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities had become a serious burden on its operations and resources. The total additional costs over the past two years had risen above US$ 16 million. No one disputed the obvious fact that Israel must take care of its own security, but the enormous amount of resources that were being used to cover those costs instead of meeting the needs of refugees was bound to give rise to objections. Despite those additional burdens, the Agency was continuing to build housing for refugees whose homes had been destroyed or torn down as a result of Israeli military operations. At the same time, the programme continued to focus on meeting immediate needs : food supplies, and where necessary, some cash assistance, job creation, trauma counselling, and special medical services. Meanwhile, it must be stressed once again that the Agency was facing what was perhaps the most challenging humanitarian situation of the past five decades, and that the solution could be found only through vigorous political efforts. Generous contributions by donors would enable the Agency to meet the minimum needs of the refugees to the extent possible. For their part, the staff of UNRWA were unflinching in their determination to continue their noble work under the most difficult of conditions.

7. **Mr. Brattskar** (Norway), Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, introducing the report of the Working Group (A/57/462), said that the Working Group had continued to follow with concern the difficulties experienced by the Agency and, in particular, its persistent grave financial situation. The Working Group had held two meetings, on 27 September and 10 October 2002, to consider the recent developments in the Agency's financial situation and to prepare its report to the General Assembly. At the beginning of the year, UNRWA had faced a critical financial outlook for 2001, which had subsequently been alleviated by increased donor contributions, as well as the adoption of cost-constraining measures which had enabled the Agency to end the year with a positive working capital for the first time in 10 years. In 2001, UNRWA had had an income of US$ 302.9 million. Those funds had been received against a regular budget of US$ 310.4 million, leaving a deficit of US$ 8.9 million in the cash budget approved by the General Assembly. Moreover, the projects budget for 2001 had been underfunded by US$ 36.8 million. The Agency's working capital, which had stood at negative US$ 4.9 million at the end of 2000, had increased to US$ 8.5 million by the end of 2001. That level of working capital reserves fell far short of the minimum level of US$ 28 million.

8. Repeated funding shortfalls in recent years had severely eroded the cash position of UNRWA. Outstanding pledges, port charges, and unreimbursed amounts owed to the Agency had exacerbated its cash position. By the end of 2002, UNRWA faced the prospect of a funding gap of US$ 16.7 million in its 2002 regular cash budget. Moreover, of the US$ 271.3 million of contribution income expected for the regular budget in 2002, only US$ 189.8 million had been received by the end of September 2002, and pledges amounting to US$ 81.5 million were still unpaid.

9. The Commissioner-General had made strenous efforts to keep donors informed about the Agency's financial situation. Responding to the special appeals made by the Secretary-General, the major donors had repeatedly made generous contributions for the funding

of the regular and project budgets of UNRWA. In addition, in order to generate a sustainable flow of funds, UNRWA had appealed to donors to pay their pledged contributions earlier in the calendar or budget years and to ensure the payment of pledges on time. The Agency's budget requirements for the 2002-2003 biennium of US$ 791.7 million had been approved by the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. The total allocated for 2002 was US$ 386.3 million. The budget reflected the minimum funding requirements that resulted from the integration of new educational programmes in the school curricula of the host countries.

10. The Working Group was once again deeply concerned about the financial prospects of UNRWA. The austerity measures adopted over the past nine years had had a negative effect on the quality of the services provided by the Agency to about 4 million Palestinian refugees. Given the gravity of that situation, the Working Group emphasized that it was the responsibility of the international community to ensure the maintenance of UNRWA services of acceptable quality. The Working Group noted with satisfaction that UNRWA had made significant progress towards reducing the impact of the structural deficit problem, particularly through the introduction of the 1999 Area Staff Rules. The Group commended the Commissioner-General and all UNRWA staff for their tireless efforts to maintain the basic operations of the Agency. The Working Group expressed alarm at the effects that the successive austerity measures adopted in previous years had had on the Agency's humanitarian operations. Those measures had prevented programmes from expanding at a rate commensurate with that of the increase in the number of refugees. The Group was gravely concerned about the impact of those measures on the lives of the Palestine refugees, particularly in areas such as education and health care, and feared that additional budget cuts could cause severe social and economic hardship to an already suffering refugee population, and also place an increased burden on the authorities of the countries hosting the refugees.

11. The Working Group agreed that the problem of the refugees was deeply rooted in a political issue which had originated more than a half a century earlier and that must be settled once and for all in accordance with all relevant United Nations resolutions. The problems currently faced by the refugees were, however, humanitarian problems that must be addressed as a shared international responsibility. The services provided by UNRWA must be viewed as the minimum required to enable the refugees to lead productive lives. Any further reduction in those services could have a destabilizing effect on the entire region. The Group expressed the hope that the international support for UNRWA embodied in the resolutions adopted each year by the General Assembly would be translated into the adoption of measures to ensure survival of the Agency on a secure financial basis.

12. The Working Group strongly urged all Governments to bear in mind those considerations when deciding upon the level of their contributions to UNRWA for 2003, and also urged Governments that had not yet contributed to UNRWA to start to do so; Governments that had so far made only relatively small contributions to increase their contributions; Governments that in the past had made generous contributions to UNRWA to continue to do so in a timely manner and to strive to increase them; and Governments that traditionally had shown a special interest in the welfare of the Palestine refugees, both in the region and beyond to begin contributing or to increase their contributions. Moreover, it strongly urged Governments to consider making special contributions sufficient to cover the deficit and build up working capital, so that UNRWA services could continue uninterrupted and the Agency could restore services cut as a result of the austerity measures, and to ensure that donor support of emergency-related and special programmes or capital projects did not in any way decrease or divert contributions to the Agency's regular programmes.

13. **Ms. Nasser** (Observer for Palestine) said that Palestine refugees, like all other refugees, had an inherent right to their homes and property, which was affirmed in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948 and in all subsequent resolutions. Certain principles remained constant, despite the passage of time or changes in conditions on the ground. In that regard, it was appropriate to stress the importance of the right to private ownership, including land. According to the records of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, 5.5 million dunums of land belonged to the Palestine refugees, Israel must recognize that ownership, and its restoration or compensation must be

the cornerstone of any settlement of the Palestine refugee problem. It was also important to reaffirm the right of the Palestinians displaced in 1967 to return to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. That right had first been affirmed in Security Council resolution 237 (1967) of 14 June 1967 and should have been realized several years earlier during the transitional period. Regrettably, that right too had remained unfulfilled because Israel, as before, was not complying with its obligations. One more principle must be clarified and reaffirmed, and that was the distinction between the right of the Palestine refugees to return or to receive compensation and the inherent right of every Palestinian to Palestinian nationality and citizenship in the State of Palestine in the future.

14. UNRWA had played a vital and historic role in alleviating the plight of the Palestine refugees. The desperate living conditions of the Palestine refugees, who now numbered more than 4 million would undoubtedly have deteriorated even further had it not been for the intervention of the international community through support of the Agency. The services provided by UNRWA to the Palestine refugees were indispensable, and for many refugees had become a matter of survival. As described in the Commissioner-General's report, the socio-econoomic situation of the Palestine refugees had remained difficult in all areas of operation, namely the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period. The situation continued to be characterized by extreme poverty, high unemployment, and inadequate and overburdened infrastructures. The conditions on the ground had continued to deteriorate during the reporting period, primarily due to the escalating of the Israeli military aggression against the Palestinian people. That, of course, had also had an impact on the work of the UNRWA and had placed an even greater burden on the Agency and on its staff and resources.

15. While the Palestine refugees throughtout the region continued to suffer hardships and despair, the situation of the Palestine refugees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had grown markedly worse, because Israel, the occupying Power, had intensified its activities in violation of international law and international humanitarian law. The events currently taking place, in which Palestinians were once again living in tents, after being forced to flee from their homes, having hurriedly gathered their belongings from beneath the rubble of their destroyed dwellings, were a painful reminder of the tragedy that had occurred in 1948. Although the issue of the practices of the occupying Power directed against the Palestinian people including war crimes, state terrorism, and systematic human rights violations, would be discussed under agenda item 77, it was necessary to refer at least briefly to those policies and practices, because they had a direct impact on the situation of the Palestine refugees and the operations of UNRWA.

16. During the reporting period, Israel's military campaign in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, had escalated to unprecedented levels. In Narah, that campaign had intensified dramatically as a result of which a large number of Palestinians had been killed or wounded, and homes, properties, institutions, and vital infrastructure had been destroyed. Since 28 September 2000, the Israel occupying forces had killed almost 2,000 Palestinians, including children, women, elderly people, and men. Many of those who had died had been Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA. Dozens of refugees had been killed as a result of the military assault on the Jenin refugee camp alone, in April 2002, and some Palestinians had died while waiting for emergency assistance. According to the data of the Commissioner-General, 2,629 shelters housing 13,145 refugees, had been damaged in the refugee camps. In the Jenin camp alone, 400 families had become homeless, and more than 1,000 shelters had been damaged. Israel's imposition of closures and severe restrictions, including round-the-clock curfews, had gravely impacted the socio-economic situation of the Palestine refugees, hindering or completely blocking their access to work, schools, health care, and even food and clean water, which had created a dire humanitarian crisis, all of which had seriously affected the operations of UNRWA and undermined its ability to assist the Palestine refugees.

17. In violation of international law, international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations, the Israeli occupying forces had repeatedly disrupted and obstructed the work of UNRWA during the reporting period. As reflected in the report, the delivery of humanitarian supplies, including food, medicine, blood and other urgently needed items, had often been blocked, and restrictions had been placed on the movement of the Agency's staff and vehicles, including doctors, nurses, and teachers. Moreover, at

Israeli checkpoints, Agency staff had been harassed and humiliated; Agency vehicles, including ambulances, had been searched; and military personnel had detained those vehicles and prevented them from transporting patients in need of urgent medical care.

18. In the light of those developments, the international community needed to emphasize again that UNRWA, like all other United Nations agencies must be allowed to carry out its mandate without any restrictions. That meant that Israel, the occupying Power, must comply with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as with its obligations and responsibilities under the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 1946 and the agreement it had signed with UNRWA. Thus, Israel must compensate the Agency for the damage done to its facilities and equipment and must remove as soon as possible all restrictions on the movement of the Agency's staff and goods. Israelis actions not only hindered the activities of UNRWA on the ground, but also placed greater burdens on the Agency's already limited resources, as noted in the report of the Commissioner-General.

19. She expressed gratitude to the donor community for their generous contributions during the reporting period in response to appeals for emergency assistance. Without those contributions, the Agency would not have been able to provide assistance in the amount necessary for meeting the needs of the refugee population. Moreover, because UNRWA was dependent on the contributions of donors, she urged donor countries to continue their contributions and, if possible, to augment them, so as to help the Agency overcome its financial problems and enable it to provide the necessary services to the refugees. In conclusion, she expressed deep appreciation to the countries hosting the refugees and commended the efforts of Jordan, Lebanon, and the Syrian Arab Republic to facilitate the Agency's work.

20. **Mr. Fallouh** (Syrian Arab Republic), after expressing appreciation to the Commissioner-General and his staff for their tireless efforts under extremely difficult conditions to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people and to the donor countries that were providing the material and financial resources that were enabling the Agency to continue to deliver the minimum services needed by the Palestine refugees, recalled that the Commissioner-General, in his report (A/57/13), expressed the hope that the work of UNRWA would be intensified in order to meet the minimum needs of the Palestine refugees who had suffered twice as a result of Israel's actions : first when Israel had forced them to leave their homes, and then when Palestinian camps and schools had been attacked by the Israeli armed forces, using aircraft, tanks, and artillery. Moreover, the Commissioner-General expressed concern about the decline in the quality of the Agency's services, as well as about attacks on UNRWA staff and on groups providing medical and humanitarian assistance to the refugees, including groups acting under the flag of the United Nations. That was a flagrant violation of the norms of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the resolutions of the General Assembly, the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 1946, and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

21. The escalation of aggression and the criminal actions of Israel were a threat to the lives and the freedom of movement of United Nations staff in the occupied territories. It should be emphasized that Israel was the aggressor, and that it was the Israelis who had occupied Palestinian territories, destroyed the homes of Palestinians, and committed bloody crimes against the Palestinian people. In response to Israel's actions and provocations, the Palestinian people, driven to despair, had risen in revolt to resist the occupiers. The principles of international law and the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly legitimized that resistance.

22. The Syrian Arab Republic, as a State hosting Palestinian refugees, had provided and was continuing to provide all kinds of assistance to the Palestinians living in its territory. It treated Palestinians in the same way as its own citizens, without any discrimination. It continued to cooperate with UNRWA and was providing it with all possible support. The Syrian Arab Republic was bearing a heavy financial burden in trying to provide a decent life for the Palestinian refugees living in its territory, as noted in paragraphs 35 and 212-226 of the Commissioner-General's report. It was providing assistance to Palestinian refugees in areas such as education, health care, social services, housing and social welfare.

23. The Syrian Arab Republic commended the efforts of the Commissioner-General and his staff to raise the quality of the services provided by the Agency to the Palestinian refugees in its territory. It should be noted

that the responsiblity for the fate of the Palestinians was borne by the international community, and the Syrian Arab Republic believed that UNRWA must continue its work until a solution was found to the Palestinian problem in keeping with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948. It was disturbing that, according to the report, the average amount spent per refugee was declining, whereas the number of refugees was increasing. In that connection, the Syrian Arab Republic urged donor countries to fullfil their financial commitments to the Agency and to increase the size of their contributions. It opposed any reduction or termination of the Agency's work in providing services to the Palestinian refugees to meet their daily needs, including those in the areas of education and health care. Moreover, his delegation believed that the Agency should not shift the burden of funding to the Palestinian refugees or the host countries.

24. Paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948, stressed the right of the Palestine refugees to repatriation and the return of their property. The General Assembly in its resolutions reaffirmed that right every year. Bearing in mind the overall situation in the region, it should be noted that ignoring the threats that were arising in connection with the refugee problem ran counter to the efforts aimed at a comprehensive settlement of the crisis in the Middle East, as well as the principles of international legitimacy and General Assembly resolutions. The current situation, which had arisen as a result of Israel's aggressive and provocative actions, using brutal military force against the Palestinians and attacking UNRWA facilities and schools on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, demonstrated that Israel did not wish to reach a just and comprehensive peace in the region that would ensure the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians to their lands.

25. **Ms. Løj** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the member countries of the European Union, and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Rumania, Slovakia and Slovenia), the associated countries (Cyprus, Malta, and Turkey), as well as the European Free Trade Association countries of the European Economic Area (Iceland and Liechtenstein), said that UNRWA was a central element in the system for immediate international response to crises. In the past year, however, severe restrictions had been placed on the access and mobility of the Agency. The European Union noted with concern the many reported instances of destruction of UNRWA facilities and installations and even attacks on staff members, some of whom had been killed or injured. The prevailing situation was unacceptable. The European Union reiterated its call to Israel to lift the closures and curfews and stop the destruction of the economic infrastructure in the occupied territories. Freedom of movement of persons and goods must be restored immediately. Israel must act in line with the norms of international humanitarian law and respect the neutrality and security of all UNRWA staff and installations. The unhindered access of humanitarian organizations to the Palestinian civilian population must be ensured at all times.

26. In 2001 there had been some encouraging developments with respect to the Agency's UNRWA regular budget and the working capital had amounted to US$ 8.5 million. However, there was a serious financing gap in the general budget of UNRWA for 2002. The current financial situation of the Agency demanded action from all States Members of the United Nations, which must ensure substantial and regular contributions so that the Agency could carry out its mandate.

27. The European Union remained the principal UNRWA donor. In response to UNRWA appeals, the European Community had increased its funding for the 2002-2005 period to 237 million euros, which would be a solid financial base for cooperation between the European Union and UNRWA during the next two biennial budget cycles. The European Union welcomed the agreements reached with the Palestinian Authority regarding value-added tax exemptions in Gaza and hoped that a similar agreement could be reached for the West Bank. The European Union supported the ongoing reforms in UNRWA and hoped that the introduction of key performance budget indicators would lead to increased transparency and efficiency. Under the current difficult conditions, the promotion of management reform and strategic planning were being hampered. The European Union urged the Agency to strive to continue all efforts to increase efficiency, identify priorities, and establish a dialogue.

28. **Mr. Abu Zeid** (Egypt) said that the general deterioration of the situation for more than two years in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had affected the

living conditions of the Palestinian refugees not only in the camps, but also in neighboring Arab countries. The refugees were bereft of hope of a safe return to their homeland, and the general deterioration of the situation had resulted in a reduction in the funds allocated by UNRWA per refugee. The grave humanitarian situation that had come about in the occupied territories was reflected in the report of the Secretary-General's Special Humanitarian Envoy. The events in the Jenin camp, the unceasing raids in the Gaza Strip, and the blockade of various Palestinian cities demonstrated that Israel, the occupying Power, was persisting in its stubborn defiance of the will of the international community as expressed in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. The Commissioner-General's report revealed a number of facts on which the Committee must take a firm stand, since they were consistent with the facts presented by other sources.

29. Currently, about 50 per cent of the Palestinians lived below the poverty line, and 26 per cent were unemployed. Moreover, the number of displaced persons and homeless people had increased. In Jenin alone, 400 families had no roof over their heads, and the number of children suffering from malnutrition was growing. The actions taken by Israeli authorities had also limited the ability of UNRWA to provide humanitarian assistance. Notwithstanding those difficulties, the Agency was managing to provide services in the areas of education, health care, and emergency assistance. Egypt welcomed the administrative and financial reforms in UNRWA, which would help strengthen it. Egypt shared the concern expressed in the Commissioner-General's report about the plight of Palestinian refugees in certain other countries. In that connection, his delegation appealed to all countries of the world to make concerted efforts to assist in improving the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and in refugee camps in other countries. Israel's continuing aggressive actions against the Palestinian people and its leaders and the retaliatory violence were only preparing the ground for further violence and would frustrate any efforts to achieve peace.

30. **Mr. Hassan** (Jordan) said that his Government believed that the sustainable operation of UNRWA in Jordan and other parts of the region could not be compromised as long as the issue of Palestinian refugees remained unresolved. Accordingly, his Government urged donors to alleviate the dire financial situation of the Agency by paying their contributions in full. Jordan welcomed the decision of the European Union to increase its support to UNRWA to 237 million euros for the period from 2002 to 2005 and hoped that the Agency's appeal for an additional US$ 167.7 million for the 2002 budget would be met.

31. Jordan called upon Israel to cooperate with UNRWA and adhere fully to the agreements reached with UNRWA thus allowing freedom of movement for UNRWA staff within the occupied Palestinian territories, and to refrain from destroying additional UNRWA infrastructure and facilities in Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza.

32. Jordan was hosting 42.3 per cent of the total number of Palestinian refugees and 90 per cent of the people who had been displaced after the events of 1967. Approximately 1.7 million Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA were living in Jordan. Over the 54 years of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the number of Palestinian refugees in Jordan had tripled. While a total of US$ 71.1 million had been allocated from the UNRWA regular budget for operations in Jordan in 2002, his Government was spending approximately 5.67 times that amount on various services for the Palestinian refugees in the areas of health care, education, security, upkeep of camps, and social services. His Government spent a total of about US$ 403 million a year for the maintenance of the Palestinian refugee camps.

33. Despite the fact that a vast majority of those refugees and displaced persons were Jordanian citizens, they retained their rights in Palestine. Jordanian citizenship had been granted to them on the basis of the declaration of unity between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the West Bank in 1950. Nevertheless, Jordanian citizenship and the privileges associated with it did not cancel or limit the rights of the refugees in their homeland.

34. **Mr. Wang Donghua** (China) said that over the past year there had been an intensification in the scale of the violence, which had resulted in a deterioration of the security situation in the region. That had also exacerbated the dire situation of the civilian population, particularly the Palestinian refugees, and had further complicated the work of UNRWA in providing humanitarian assistance. The Agency's activities were an integral part of the peace process in

the Middle East, and for that reason they needed to be supported and enhanced; in the meantime, however, a gap remained between the volume of resources at the Agency's disposal and its actual needs. That situation would affect the work of UNRWA and must be given due attention by the international community. The solution of the Middle East problem must include not only political, but also economic aspects. China would continue to support the Agency's work and contribute to its funding; it hoped that the international community would also support the Agency's efforts to provide assistance to the Palestinian refugees by making generous contributions. China called on Israel to rescind the restrictions and ensure the safety of Agency personnel. The solution of the Palestinian refugee problem depended on an early and complete solution of the Middle East problem. His delegation hoped that Israel and Palestine would focus on the interests of their peoples, renounce violence and retaliatory violence, and work together with international intermediaries towards the speedy achievement of peace in accordance with the principle of land for peace.

35. **Mr. Mekel** (Israel) said that his delegation wished to formally record its appreciation to UNRWA for the work it was doing, particularly in the fields of health care and education. Israel was committed to maintaining a productive working relationship with the Agency. The Agency's work had been particularly difficult in the past year because of the escalation of the campaign of terrorism launched by the Palestinians against the citizens of Israel. The security measures taken by Israel were a consequence, not a cause, of the difficult situation in the region. The current predicament of the Palestinian people was the inevitable result of the conscious abandonment of negotiations in favour of violence and terrorism.

36. Prior to September 2000, as a result of the Oslo peace process, the Palestinian people had achieved real, tangible gains, namely, increased autonomy, self-rule, and greater political status, as well as an influx of foreign investment and enhanced cooperation with Israel and the international community. But the violence and terrorism had all but wiped out those gains. Within the framework of the peace process, Israel and the Palestinians had agreed that the refugee question would be addressed within the context of final status negotiations. Israel therefore could not accept efforts to circumvent the bilateral negotiating process, because such efforts merely distracted attention from the core issues of the conflict and detracted from the ability of the parties to resolve those issues bilaterally. For that reason, Israel objected to the politicization of the resolutionss adopted annually by the Committee because they were replete with politically charged language, ignored the decisions of the Madrid Peace Conference, and sought to prejudge the final outcome of the negotiations, which must be determined through discussions between the parties themselves.

37. It must not be forgotten that the circumstances that had produced the problem of the Palestinian refugees had also produced another group of refugees : the hundreds of thousands of Jews who had been forced to leave Arab lands in which they had lived for centuries. Unlike Palestinian refugees, however, Jewish refugees were not being kept in poverty by their host State to serve callous political interests. But the Arab States, with one exception, were refusing to take practical steps to alleviate the plight of the refugees they had accepted. The total Arab contribution to UNRWA still amounted to less than 1 per cent of the Agency's annual budget.

38. Israel was genuinely sympathetic to the plight of the refugees and, often at risk to its own security, had taken steps to improve the situation of the Palestinian people. Some 25,000 Palestinians, in addition to some 8,000 business people and merchants, entered Israel to work every day. Even when security conditions were difficult, Israel made every effort to ensure that medical and rescue workers, municipal services, and other commercial and public service activities operated freely. The flow of goods to and from Gaza and the West Bank was continuing almost without interruption. The Sufa Crossing, which had previously been used only for the transport of building materials, had been opened, and UNRWA humanitarian goods were now able to pass through it.

39. Israel was committed to finding a long-term, pragmatic and humanitarian sollution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees within the framework of permanent status negotiations. In July 2000, at Camp David, Israel had proposed important ideas in that respect within the framework of a larger peace proposal. Those proposals had not only been rejected - they had been met by an outbreak of violence and terrorism.

40. While Israel was completely committed to the humanitarian work of UNRWA, there were several aspects of the Agency's conduct which it found troubling. Since the onset of violence in September 2000, Palestinian terrorists had used refugee camps and other UNRWA facilities as their bases. While UNRWA had been quick to draw attention to Israeli practices that impeded its work, it had yet to condemn the practices of Palestinian terrorists that directly endangered the population it had been charged with assisting.

41. As the Secretary-General noted in his report prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution ES-10/10, Palestinian militants in the camps and elsewhere had adopted methods which constituted breaches of international law that had been and continued to be condemned by the United Nations. While recognizing that providing security in the refugee camps was not part of the Agency's mandate, Israel nonetheless believed that the Agency had a responsibility to draw attention to those blatant violations of international humanitarian law. Over the past two years, Israel had encountered incidents in which terrorists had used ambulances bearing international symbols, such as that of the Red Crescent, to smuggle weapons, munitions and even suicide bombers. Israel was also disturbed by the Agency's cooperation with the Arab boycott of Israel and companies that did business with Israel. By cooperating with an economic weapon used by the Arab States against the commercial interests of the State of Israel, the Agency was violating its obligation to act impartially. Moreover, the public activities of UNRWA in the form of press releases, statements to the media and so forth, went beyond its purely humanitarian mandate. Israel had strong reservations regarding UNRWA statements that were of a political nature and did not take into account the full context of the security situation that Israel was facing. In that light, it was hardly surprising that the debate on UNRWA and the resolutions adopted annually by the Committee were entirely one-sided. Aside from misrepresenting the reality on the ground, those resolutions would do nothing to return the parties to a political process. The resolutions on UNRWA should be consolidated into one resolution that was counterproductive and free of inflammatory political language.

42. His delegation wished to emphasize once again that while Israel was concerned about the situation of the Palestinian refugees and would continue to do everything in its power to assist them, the most important contribution that could be made was to restore an environment conducive to a political process. Israel hoped that other Member States would recognize that and would place the interests of the people of the region above their personal political objectives.

43. **Mr. Karagoz** (Turkey) said that the grim situation in the Middle East remained a cause of great concern for the entire international community. Despite intensive diplomatic efforts, the negative developments on the ground gave no reason to hope that an atmosphere conducive to the achievement of lasting peace, security, and stability would soon be reached. Turkey deplored the tragic events that had occurred. Both parties had a responsibility to end the violence and the escalation of tension. Turkey reiterated its position of principle that terrorism could not be justified under any pretext and was doomed to fail in any case.

44. Various components of the serious humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian territory had worsened the already adverse living conditions of the Palestinian refugees. However, his delegation was pleased to note that UNRWA was continuing to play its crucial role in meeting the vital humanitarian needs of that most vulnerable part of the Palestinian population. With its 52 years of unique experience in the field of humanitarian relief, UNRWA remained an indispensable component of the resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem by providing education, health care, relief and social services, as well as microfinance and microenterprise programmes for about 4 million refugees.

45. Turkey remained firmly committed to the goals and mandate of UNRWA. It was convinced that the uninterrupted provision of UNRWA services during the current difficulties was essential to restoring calm and stability. In that respect, his delegation expressed its regret that the closures, curfews and other restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip had resulted in restriction of the mobility of the Palestinian population and had had repercussions on their daily lives and their future, as well as impacting the Agency's ability to carry out its operations effectively in support of Palestine refugees.

Turkey called upon Israel to lift the closures and other restrictive measures imposed upon the Palestinians.

46. During the reporting period, the movement of humanitarian goods, particularly to places where they were urgently needed, had been blocked, delayed, or made very difficult. Obstacles had also been placed in the way of medical personnel participating in humanitarian operations. Turkey condemned acts of killing, beating, injuring or humiliating UNRWA personnel.

47. The Agency's recurrent financial crises remained a cause of profound concern. Turkey fully supported the emergency appeals launched in 2002, aimed at overcoming the existing difficulties. It was regrettable, however, that the Agency was facing a deficit of US$ 16.7 million in its regular budget for 2002. Addressing humanitarian problems required collective responsibility and pragmatic steps. Turkey welcomed the strengthening of the Agency's communications and information capacity and supported the reform process with respect to internal management.

48. **Mr. Hadi Ali** (Malaysia) said that his delegation continued to attach great importance to the work of UNRWA aimed at alleviating the sufferings of the Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, as well as in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, through programmes for improving their socio-economic conditions. The presence of UNRWA in the region was critical to the well-being of the refugees in the mounting humanitarian crisis and should continue until a just and lasting peace was established in the Middle East.

49. His delegation strongly condemned the military offensive launched by the Israeli Defense Forces against Palestinian cities, towns, villages, and refugee camps, which had resulted in widespread damage to and destruction of Palestinian property and infrastructure, including governmental institutions, residential buildings, refugee shelters, water and electricity supply systems and sewage disposal systems, as well as UNRWA installations such as schools, training centres, and health care facilities. It was dismayed to note that Israeli forces were using a number of seized UNRWA schools as bases and centres for detention and interrogation of Palestinians. The Commissioner-General's comments regarding the measures imposed by the Israeli authorities to control movement to and from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank were a cause for grave concern. Those restrictions had had a negative impact on the Agency's humanitarian work. They had disrupted the lives of the Palestinians and intensified the downturn of the Palestinian economy, causing increased unemployment. Moreover, the delivery of humanitarian goods to those who needed them was often blocked, delayed, or made very difficult, and, because of the actions of Israeli forces, UNRWA staff and vehicles faced life-threatening situations which had sometimes even resulted in death. His delegation called on Israel to fulfil its obligations under the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and the bilateral agreement between UNRWA and the Government of Israel and to comply with the international norms on humanitarian access.

50. His delegation was concerned about the budgetary constraints and other problems UNRWA faced in delivering services. Despite those constraints, UNRWA was continuing to perform effectively the tasks assigned to it. As the Commissioner-General had observed, improving the financial situation required concerted steps by donor countries to maintain at least the previous year's improvement in the rate of growth of contributions, so that the structural deficits in its budget could be eliminated and a sound basis could be established for its future financial viability. For its part, Malaysia would continue to contribute within its means to the work of UNRWA, over and above its bilateral assistance to the Palestinian people. His delegation expressed the hope that other members of the international community would also make contributions to UNRWA so as to improve its capacity to assist the Palestine refugees.

51. **Mr. Laggner** (Switzerland) said that, more than 50 years after its creation, UNRWA remained an indispensable humanitarian institution that, in providing assistance to 3.8 million Palestinian refugees, was translating the solidarity of the international community into concrete deeds. As noted in the Commissioner-General's report, the staff of UNRWA, despite difficult working conditions were managing to carry out the programmes for providing assistance to refugees. His delegation fully supported the efforts to identify and provide targeted support to the neediest categories of the population, particularly in the occupied territories. Switzerland was providing support to UNRWA by making contributions to its regular budget, as well as by allocating additional

funds in response to the Agency's appeals for emergency assistance. In that connection, he appealed to all donors, traditional and potential, to consider the additional needs caused by the deterioration of the situation on the ground.

52. The closures and other restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities in the occupied territories were having dire effects on Palestinian civilians, as had been confirmed in several independent investigations. It must be borne in mind that the refugees represented the most vulnerable category of the population. All humanitarian organizations were experiencing difficulties in gaining access to persons in need of assistance, as a result of which it was becoming increasingly difficult to evaluate specific needs and monitor the implementation of programmes. In that connection, the efforts of UNRWA to improve the quality of its status reports were commendable.

53. Switzerland attached great importance to the coordination of humanitarian assistance. In that connection, it appealed to United Nations agencies and programmes to continue to pursue a strategy based on complementarity and non-duplication of operational activities. UNRWA should ensure a permanent dialogue with other participants in humanitarian activity, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, which had a unique and independent role deriving from the Geneva Conventions of 1949. The report also focused attention on the frequent actions of the Israeli Defense Forces that ran counter to the norms of international law. Those actions were also at variance with the obligations emanating from the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 1946 and the 1967 bilateral agreement between the Government of Israel and UNRWA.

54. Switzerland called upon the Israeli authorities to ensure unhindered access to the occupied territories to humanitarian organizations for the purpose of providing services to the population and refugees living there. That applied to the import and delivery of relief materials, as well as the transport of the sick and the injured, and conformed to the agreements concluded between the Government of Israel and UNRWA.

55. **Mr. Requeijo** (Cuba) said that the work of UNRWA was acquiring increasing importance in view of the continuing escalation of violence against the civilian population in the occupied Palestinian territories. Since its inception, UNRWA had been carrying out highly commendable work to improve the living conditions of the Palestinian refugees. His delegation expressed its deepest concern about the budgetary and financial problems of the Agency, which were undermining its ability to respond effectively to the growing needs of the refugees.

56. Cuba expressed its appreciation to all countries and institutions whose assistance was making it possible for the Palestinian refugees to receive the support of the international community that they needed so much. In addition, Cuba reiterated its support for the UNRWA appeal that the volume of contributions and resources should be maintained and increased in order to face the current challenges. His delegation found it regrettable that the Government of Israel was maintaining the restrictions that were hindering the performance of the Agency's functions.

57. **Mr. Kabtani** (Tunisia) said that his delegation had carefully studied the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA and was grateful to the host countries for accommodating Palestinian refugees and providing them services for 50 years, as well as to the donor countries for the material and financial assistance that enabled UNRWA to continue to carry out its mandate. The functions performed by UNRWA were of fundamental importance to the provision of services to Palestinian refugees, which would make it possible for them to exercise their inalienable rights within the framework of a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian problem. The financial difficulties which UNRWA faced were having a negative effect on the provision of those services. His delegation appealed to the international community, particularly donor countries, to increase their contributions to the funding of UNRWA so that it could carry out its humanitarian programme. UNRWA should also expand its cooperation with international organizations, which would enable it to provide assistance more effectively to Palestinian refugees. At the same time, UNRWA needed to increase the efficiency of its methods of management and operation.

58. The actions of Israel as the occupying Power gave cause for profound concern and were hindering the work of UNRWA; they were directed against UNRWA facilities and personnel and included the destruction and damaging of buildings and facilities and refugee locations, such as in the Jenin refugee camp, and the closing of UNRWA schools and their use

as military camps and centres. Those actions contravened international law and the agreements signed between Israel and UNRWA. His delegation called for the adoption of emergency measures to remove the restrictions on the movement of UNRWA personnel and the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian refugees. Tunisia reaffirmed its support for UNRWA and emphasized the need to focus primary attention on the refugee question, given that the rights of the refugees were laid down in General Assembly resolutions, specifically its resolution 194 (III) adopted in 1948. That would make it possible to strengthen the basis for security and stability throughout the region.

59. **Mr. Nguyen Van Bao** (Viet Nam) said that, over the past 50 years, the Palestinian people had become refugees in their own land. More than 4 million Palestine refugees, including 1.45 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, were living in conditions of poverty, the economy was in a critical state and 50 per cent of the Palestinians lived below the poverty line. Meanwhile, the Agency should be commended for its efforts to help the Palestinian people, as should the donor countries for their generous contributions, which were helping alleviate the sufferings of those people. The Palestinians were not in that situation by choice. Their plight was rooted in a political issue with which everyone was familiar. The escalation of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially after Israel's military operations in the city of Ramallah, the destruction of President Arafat's headquarters, and the killing of innocent Palestinians, gave cause for deep concern. Those actions were undermining the peace process, sowing hatred between the two sides, and threatening peace, security and stability in the Middle East and in the region as a whole.

60. Viet Nam, along with other members of the international community, called for an immediate freeze on the building of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and urged the two sides to return to the negotiating table to resolve the conflict by peacefull means. For many years, the United Nations had undertaken efforts to achieve a peace agreement in the Middle East. Viet Nam continued to support the United Nations in its efforts to help resolve the conflict and expressed its appreciation of and continued support for the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, UNRWA, non-governmental organizations and other bodies to relieve the suffering of the Palestinian people.

61. **Mr. Percaya** (Indonesia) said that, despite the multitude of difficulties caused by the turbulent events of the past year, UNRWA had once again proven itself as one of the most successful humanitarian programmes of the United Nations. The Palestinian economy, in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, was undergoing a severe downturn. From September 2000 to December 2001, total unemployment had risen from 10 per cent to 26 per cent. UNRWA operations had begun to experience disruptions, and increasing incidents of destruction of its offices and equipment. UNRWA staff had been fired upon by Israeli forces, and some of them had been killed, injured, beaten, or humiliated. In addition, the Agency had endured closures of its operations, restrictions and checkpoint delays. Given all that, it was particularly gratifying that, even under those conditions, UNRWA was continuing to serve Palestinian refugees so well.

62. UNRWA had made great strides in the areas of education, health care, communications, and internal management reforms, as well as in the provision of relief and social services. Indonesia hoped that donors would take the necessary steps to ensure that the solid achievements of UNRWA were not put in jeopardy. Despite the hostile circumstances in which it had to operate, UNRWA had achieved considerable success and had become the symbol of the international community's commitment to ensuring the well-being of the Palestinian refugees until a just and lasting settlement of the refugee problem was achieved. Indonesia would continue to extend its support to UNRWA. UNRWA must not lack the resources needed to fulfil its mission. Indonesia believed that the work of the Agency was a viable foundation for establishing peace and stability in the Middle East and deserved the international community's unconditional support.

63. **Mr. Brattskar** (Norway) said that, over the past two years, the situation in the Palestinian Territory had deteriorated dramatically. At the current critical stage, it was more important than ever to provide UNRWA the means and resources it needed to fulfil its mandate and to maintain the level of its services. The international community must give the Agency the means to carry out its tasks. In fulfilling the mandate of UNRWA, Agency staff often risked their very lives. Norway emphasized that the Government of Israel must respect the norms of international humanitarian law in the Palestinian Territory. Any attempts to obstruct the work of UNRWA constituted a violation of

the humanitarian norms that the international community was obliged to uphold. The immunity that UNRWA enjoyed as an international humanitarian organization must also be respected. The conflict in the Middle East could never be resolved by militar means. The only possible solution to the current situation would have to be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), and 1397 (2002).

64. Norway remained committed to maintaining the level of support and, subject to parliamentary approval, intended to grant approximately US$ 13 million to the UNRWA General Fund for 2003. In response to the emergency appeals of UNRWA, his Government had made a total contribution of US$ 3.4 million and had provided funding for the reconstruction of refugee homes in Gaza.

65. **The Chairman**, recalling that delegations had held consultations on agenda item 77, suggested that, based on the general agreement reached in those consultations, the Committee should defer its consideration of that item until 11 and 12 November 2002.

66. *It was so decided.*

67. **The Chairman** suggested that, in light of the decision just taken and given that the Committee traditionally took action on resolutions pertaining to agenda items 76 and 77 at the same meeting, the Committee should defer taking action on those draft resolutions until the meeting on Tuesday, 12 November.

68. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 12 :55 p.m.